SCHILLER'S

MARY STUART

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SCHILLER'S

MARY STUART

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

EDWARD BROOKS, JR.

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PHILADELPHIA:
DAVID McKAY, PUBLISHER,
604-8 SOUTH WASHINGTON SQUARE.

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INTRODUCTION.

In the following pages will be found a translation of "Marie Stuart," a tragedy by Friederich Schiller, one of the greatest writers the German nation can lay claim to. In fact there is but one other German who is entitled to rank with him as an author. Schiller's contemporary and friend, Goëthe, is generally conceded to have been his superior as a writer of general literature, although in ballad-writing, in the opinion of a majority of the later critics, Goëthe must yield the palm to his more youthful friend.

Schiller's greatest work is probably his "Wilhelm Tell," though it is thought by some that this drama is equalled by his "Wallenstein." "Marie Stuart" was written after the latter and before the former of these two plays, about four or five years prior to the author's death. From a technical standpoint, the "Marie Stuart" is entitled to rank as one of the best of the poet's compositions, but there is a spirit about the play which indicates that Schiller lacked interest in his subject. The closing scenes of Queen Mary's life have been criticized as greatly lacking the proper poetic treatment, and in fact none of the characters in this play can be said to have been as finely conceived as the personages represented in either of the two other plays. It is a curious and interesting

fact that none of Schiller's characters taken from life are as finely drawn as those which are the creations of his genius and imagination.

The author's life, though a brief one, and very largely devoid of interesting incidents, is none the less a remarkable one, and cannot fail to excite the admiration of all by its wonderful simplicity and its patient and calm resignation.

Schiller was born in 1759, at Marbach, in Würtemberg. His grandfather and great grandfather had been bakers in Bittenfield, but his father, who was a man of remarkable intelligence and energy, had risen above this vocation, and served as a surgeon in the Bavarian army with such distinction that he eventually obtained the rank of Major. Schiller was an only son, the second of six children, two of whom died in infancy. His earliest education was received at the hands of the clergyman of the village of Lorch, where his father was stationed as a recruiting officer. Subsequently, when Schiller was about eight years old, his parents removed to Ludwigsburg, and the young boy attended the Latin school of that place. In 1775 his father was made overseer of the plantations and nursery-gardens belonging to "Solitude," a country residence of the Duke of Würtenberg, near Stuttgart.

Schiller had been originally intended to study for the ministry, but at the urgent request of the Duke of Würtemberg his parents abandoned this project, and sent the young man to a military academy which had been established at Solitude for the training of young men for military and civil service. Here Schiller first commenced to study law, but not finding much of interest in this pursuit he begged to be allowed to take up the study of medi-

cine, which request was granted. At a very early age he gave evidence of a taste and inclination for those pursuits which attained for him his renown and fame. At the military academy he was, however, compelled to restrain his desire to indulge his literary tastes, as the rules of that institution forbade the reading of any authors which were foreign to the reader's particular line of study, even during recreation hours. The longings of such genius, however, were not to be restrained by the mere rules of a military academy, and eluding the vigilance of the inspectors, Schiller devoured with avidity such books as he was able to lay his hands upon. Among these were some of the writings of Rousseau, the early works of Goëthe, and translations of a few of Shakspere's plays. His reading inspired him with a desire to give expression to his own thoughts, the result of which was the composition, in part, of the poet's first dramatic production, "The Robbers."

In the latter part of 1780 Schiller was appointed medical officer to a regiment of grenadiers stationed at Stuttgart. His official duties were such that he found he had much more leisure to indulge his literary tastes, and in a short time "The Robbers" was completed and published. In the following year the play was produced at the Mannheim theatre, and met with such an enthusiastic reception as to cause the author to think that he might devote his whole time to the work of dramatic writing.

Shortly afterwards, the Duke of Würtemberg, hearing of Schiller's absence from Stuttgart without leave, caused him to be placed under arrest for a period of two weeks, and peremptorily forbade him to write any more books or hold any communication with persons residing out of

Würtemberg. This tyrannical order caused the young man's heart to swell with righteous indignation, and resolving to at least secure freedom for himself, he fled to Mannheim, in company with a young musician named Streicher.

At Mannheim Schiller devoted himself entirely to dramatic composition, and soon completed another play, which, however, was not accepted by the manager of the theatre. Discouraged at this failure, and alarmed by rumors of a request for his extradition, the author took refuge at Bauerbach, where he applied himself diligently to the work of writing plays. About seven months later he returned to Mannheim, and was appointed dramatic poet to the Mannheim theatre. Two plays were produced, the first of which was rather coldly received, but the warmth of the reception which the second play met with more than compensated for this disappointment.

About a year later Schiller's engagement at the Mannheim theatre was cancelled, and he was much perplexed as to what he should do to support himself and to free himself from the burden of the heavy debts he had contracted. He finally decided to attempt the issuing of a periodical called *Thalia*, to be written entirely by himself. The first number of this publication appeared in 1785.

About this time he received a very pressing invitation from some of his admirers to make them a visit at their homes near Leipsic, one of them even offering to lend him the money to make the journey. Schiller, weary of his incessant struggles, yielded to their solicitations, and the greater part of the years 1785 and 1786 were spent in Leipsic and Dresden, in company with his friends, in the

preparation of numerous compositions, some of which were published in *Thalia*.

In 1787 Schiller went to Weimar, where he devoted himself to the study of history, and in the following year published his "History of the Revolt of the Netherlands." The publication of this work procured for him that which he had greatly longed for, viz., a quiet and independent social position in his appointment to a professorship at the University of Jena. He delivered his first lecture at this institution in 1789, and thus inaugurated a professorship which lasted for ten years.

In 1788 Schiller met Charlotte von Langefeld, a young and charming country girl, who possessed a character of great sweetness and refinement, and an education unusual for a girl of her class. The acquaintance ripened into a warm affection, and in 1790 the two were united in marriage. The union proved to be a most happy one, and the poet found a constant source of strength and happiness in the loving and sympathetic companionship of his wife.

A short time after his marriage Schiller was attacked by a dangerous illness, from the effects of which he never entirely recovered. He was always in delicate health, and at times suffered almost intolerable pain. In 1793, by the kindness of the Prince of Augustenberg, he was enabled to obtain a short rest from his university duties, and in company with his wife returned to his native State, Würtemberg, where he passed the time happily, in pleasant intercourse with his father and mother and sisters.

Upon his return to Jena the following spring he abandoned his historical researches and devoted himself to the study of philosophy. His inspiration was mainly derived from Kant, but he gave expression to many inde-

pendent ideas and judgments, and it is said that his theories exercised considerable influence upon German writers on art and literature.

Upon Schiller's first meeting with Goëthe, which took place in 1788, the two did not attract each other greatly; but in 1794, at a meeting of a scientific society at Jena, a conversation which took place between these two writers resulted in a warm friendship springing up between them. The association of these two great minds is regarded to have been of benefit to each. To Schiller is largely due the inspiration of Goëthe's later writings, while Goëthe is largely responsible for the keener and more accurate observation of ordinary facts which is apparent in Schiller's latest works.

Upon the production of "Wallenstein," Schiller determined to devote himself entirely to the work of dramatic writing, and for the purpose of being near to a theatre, he, in 1799, took up his residence in Weimar, where he passed the remainder of his life. During his last years his genius received many tokens of recognition. In 1802 he was raised to noble rank, and in 1804 it was intimated that, if he so desired, he would be invited to settle in Berlin under conditions more advantageous than those which then surrounded him. His health was, however, at this time completely broken, and in May of the following year, in the forty-sixth year of his age, after many years of terrible physical suffering, he succumbed to an attack of fever.

MARY STUART.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

ELIZABETH, *Queen of England.*
MARY STUART, *Queen of Scots, a Prisoner in England.*
ROBERT DUDLEY, *Earl of Leicester.*
GEORGE TALBOT, *Earl of Shrewsbury.*
WILLIAM CECIL, *Lord Burleigh, Lord High Treasurer.*
Earl of Kent.
SIR WILLIAM DAVISON, *Secretary of State.*
SIR AMIAS PAULET, *Keeper of* MARY.
SIR EDWARD MORTIMER, *his Nephew.*
COUNT L'AUBESPINE, *the French Ambassador.*
COUNT BELLIEVRE, *Envoy Extraordinary from France.*
O'KELLY, *Mortimer's Friend.*
SIR DRUE DRURY, *another Keeper of* MARY.
SIR ANDREW MELVIL, *her House Steward.*
BURGOYNE, *her Physician.*
HANNAH KENNEDY, *her Nurse.*
MARGARET CURL, *her Attendant.*
Sheriff of the County.
Officer of the Guard.
French and English Lords.
Soldiers.
Servants of State, belonging to ELIZABETH.
Servants and Female Attendants of the Queen of Scots.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

A common Apartment in the Castle of Fotheringay.

HANNAH KENNEDY *contending violently with* PAULET, *who is about to break open a closet;* DRURY *with an iron crow.*

KEN. How now, Sir? What fresh outrage have we here? Back from that cabinet!

PAULET. Whence came the jewel?

I know 'twas from an upper chamber thrown;
And you would bribe the gard'ner with your trinkets.
A curse on woman's wiles! In spite of all
My strict precaution and my active search,
Still treasures here, still costly gems concealed.
And doubtless there are more where this lay hid.
[*Advancing towards the cabinet.*

KEN. Intruder, back! here lie my lady's secrets.

PAUL. Exactly what I seek. [*Drawing forth papers.*

KENNEDY. Mere trifling papers;
The amusements only of an idle pen,
To cheat the dreary tedium of a dungeon.

PAUL. In idle hours the evil mind is busy.

KEN. Those writings are in French.

PAULET. So much the worse.
That tongue betokens England's enemy.

KEN. Sketches of letters to the Queen of England.

PAUL. I'll be their bearer. Ha! what glitters here?
[*He touches a secret spring, and draws out jewels from a private drawer.*
A royal diadem enriched with stones,
And studded with the fleur-de-lis of France!
[*He hands it to his Assistant.*
Here, take it, Drury, lay it with the rest.
[*Exit* DRURY.
[And ye have found the means to hide from us
Such costly things, and screen them, until now,
From our inquiring eyes?]

KENNEDY. O insolent
And tyrant power to which we must submit!

PAUL. She can work ill as long as she hath treasures,
For all things turn to weapons in her hands.

KENNEDY (*supplicating*).
O, Sir ! be merciful ; deprive us not
Of the last jewel that adorns our life !
'Tis my poor Lady's only joy to view
This symbol of her former majesty;
Your hands long since have robbed us of the rest.
PAUL. 'Tis in safe custody ; in proper time
'Twill be restored to you with scrupulous care.
KEN. Who that beholds these naked walls could say
That Majesty dwelt here ? Where is the throne ?
Where the imperial canopy of state ?
Must she not set her tender foot, still used
To softest treading, on the rugged ground ?
With common pewter, which the lowliest dame
Would scorn, they furnish forth her homely table.
PAUL. Thus did she treat her spouse at Stirling once,
And pledged, the while, her paramour in gold.
KEN. Even the mirror's trifling aid withheld.
PAUL. The contemplation of her own vain image
Incites to hope, and prompts to daring deeds.
KEN. Books are denied her to divert her mind.
PAUL. The Bible still is left to mend her heart.
KEN. Even of her very lute she is deprived !
PAUL. Because she tuned it to her wanton airs.
KEN. Is this a fate for her, the gentle born,
Who in her very cradle was a Queen ;
Who, rear'd in Catherine's luxurious court,
Enjoyed the fulness of each earthly pleasure ?
Was't not enough to rob her of her power ?
Must ye then envy her its paltry tinsel ?
A noble heart in time resigns itself
To great calamities with fortitude ;
But yet is cuts one to the soul to part

At once with all life's little outward trappings!

PAUL. These are the things that turn the human heart
To vanity, which should collect itself
In penitence;—for a lewd, vicious life,
Want and abasement are the only penance.

KEN. If youthful blood has led her into error,
With her own heart and God she must account:—
There is no judge in England over her.

PAUL. She shall have judgment where she hath transgress'd.

KEN. Her narrow bonds restrain her from transgression.

PAUL. And yet she found the means to stretch her arm
Into the world from out these narrow bonds,
And, with the torch of civil war, inflame
This realm against our Queen (whom God preserve)
And arm assassin bands. Did she not rouse
From out these walls the malefactor Parry,
And Babington, to the detested crime
Of regicide? And did this iron grate
Prevent her from decoying to her toils
The virtuous heart of Norfolk? Saw we not
The first best head in all this island fall
A sacrifice for her upon the block?
[The noble house of Howard fell with him.]
And did this sad example terrify
These mad adventurers, whose rival zeal
Plunges for her into this deep abyss?
The bloody scaffold bends beneath the weight
Of her new daily victims; and we ne'er
Shall see an end till she herself, of all
The guiltiest, be offer'd up upon it.
O! curses on the day when England took
This Helen to its hospitable arms.

KEN. Did England then receive her hospitably?
O hapless Queen! who, since that fatal day
When first she set her foot within this realm,
And, as a suppliant—a fugitive—
Came to implore protection from her sister,
Has been condemned, despite the law of nations
And royal privilege, to weep away
The fairest years of youth in prison walls.
And now, when she hath suffer'd everything
Which in imprisonment is hard and bitter,
Is like a felon summoned to the bar,
Foully accused, and though herself a queen,
Constrained to plead for honor and for life.

PAUL. She came amongst us as a murderess,
Chased by her very subjects from a throne
Which she had oft by vilest deeds disgrac'd.
Sworn against England's welfare came she hither
To call the times of bloody Mary back,
Betray our Church to Romish tyranny,
And sell our dear-bought liberties to France.
Say, why disdain'd she to subscribe the treaty
Of Edinborough—to resign her claim
To England's crown—and with one single word,
Trac'd by her pen, throw wide her prison gates?
No:—she had rather live in vile confinement,
And see herself ill-treated, than renounce
The empty honors of her barren title.
Why acts she thus? Because she trusts to wiles
And treacherous arts of base conspiracy,
And, hourly plotting schemes of mischief, hopes
To conquer, from her prison, all this isle.

KEN. You mock us, Sir, and edge your cruelty
With words of bitter scorn:—that *she* should form

Such projects ; *she*, who 's here immured alive,
To whom no sound of comfort, not a voice
Of friendship comes from her beloved home ;
Who hath so long no human face beheld,
Save her stern gaoler's unrelenting brows,
Till now, of late, in your uncourteous cousin
She sees a second keeper, and beholds
Fresh bolts and bars around her multiplied.

PAUL. No iron grate is proof against her wiles.
How do I know these bars are not filed through?
How that this floor, these walls, that seem so strong
Without, may not be hollow from within,
And let in felon treach'ry when I sleep?
Accursed office that's intrusted to me,
To guard this cunning mother of all ill !
Fear scares me from my sleep ; and in the night
I, like a troubled spirit, roam and try
The strength of every bolt, and put to proof
Each guard's fidelity :—I see, with fear,
The dawning of each morn, which may confirm
My apprehensions :—yet, thank God, there's hope
That all my fears will soon be at an end ;
For rather would I at the gates of hell
Stand sentinel, and guard the dev'lish host
Of damned souls, than this deceitful Queen.

KEN. Here comes the Queen.

PAULET. Christ's image in her hand,
Pride, and all worldly lusts, within her heart.

SCENE II.

The same. Enter MARY *veiled, a crucifix in her hand.*

KENNEDY (*hastening towards her*).
O gracious Queen ! they tread us under foot ;

No end of tyranny and base oppression ;
Each coming day heaps fresh indignities,
New sufferings on thy royal head.

MARY. Be calm—
Say, what has happened?

KENNEDY. See! thy cabinet
Is forc'd ;—thy papers,—and thy only treasure,
Which with such pains we had secur'd, the last
Poor remnant of thy bridal ornaments
From France, is in his hands :—nought now remains
Of royal state—thou art indeed bereft!

MARY. Compose yourself, my Hannah! and believe me,
'Tis not these baubles which can make a queen :—
Basely indeed they may behave to us,
But they cannot debase us. I have learnt
To use myself to many a change in England ;
I can support this too. Sir, you have ta'en
By force what I this very day designed
To have deliver'd to you. There's a letter
Amongst these papers for my royal sister
Of England—Pledge me, Sir, your word of honor,
To give it to her majesty's own hands,
And not to the deceitful care of Burleigh.

PAUL. I shall consider what is best to do.

MARY. Sir, you shall know its import. In this letter
I beg a favor, a great favor of her,—
That she herself will give me audience,—she!
Whom I have never seen. I have been summon'd
Before a court of men, whom I can ne'er
Acknowledge as my peers—of men to whom
My heart denies its confidence. The Queen
Is of my family, my rank, my sex ;
To her alone—a sister, queen and woman—

Can I unfold my heart.

PAULET. Too oft, my Lady,
Have you entrusted both your fate and honor
To men less worthy your esteem than these.

MARY. I, in the letter, beg another favor,
And surely nought but inhumanity
Can here reject my prayer. These many years
Have I, in prison, miss'd the Church's comfort,
The blessing of the sacraments:—and she
Who robs me of my freedom and my crown,
Who seeks my very life, can never wish
To shut the gates of heaven upon my soul.

PAUL. Whene'er you wish, the Dean shall wait upon you.

MARY (*interrupting him sharply*).
Talk to me not of Deans. I ask the aid
Of one of my own Church—a Catholic priest.

PAUL. [That is against the publish'd laws of England.

MARY. The laws of England are no rule for me.
I am not England's subject; I have ne'er
Consented to its laws, and will not bow
Before their cruel and despotic sway.
If 'tis your will, to the unheard-of rigor
Which I have borne, to add this new oppression,
I must submit to what your power ordains;—
Yet will I raise my voice in loud complaints.]
I also wish a public notary,
And secretaries, to prepare my will—
My sorrows and my prison's wretchedness
Prey on my life—my days, I fear, are number'd—
I feel that I am near the gates of death.

PAUL. These serious contemplations well become you.

MARY. And know I, then, that some too ready hand
May not abridge this tedious work of sorrow?

I would indite my will, and make disposal
Of what belongs to me.

PAUL. This liberty
May be allow'd to you, for England's Queen
Will not enrich herself by plundering you.

MARY. I have been parted from my faithful women,
And from my servants;—tell me, where are they?
What is their fate? I can indeed dispense
At present with their service, but my heart
Will feel rejoiced to know these faithful ones
Are not exposed to suff'ring and to want!

PAUL. Your servants have been cared for; [and again
You shall behold whate'er is taken from you:
And all shall be restored in proper season.] [*Going.*

MARY. And will you leave my presence thus again,
And not relieve my fearful anxious heart
From the fell torments of uncertainty?
Thanks to the vigilance of your hateful spies,
I am divided from the world;—no voice
Can reach me through these prison-walls;—my fate
Lies in the hands of those who wish my ruin.
A month of dread suspense has pass'd already,
Since when the forty high commissioners
Surprised me in this castle, and erected,
With most unseemly haste, their dread tribunal;
They forced me, stunn'd, amaz'd, and unprepar'd,
Without an advocate, from memory,
Before their unexampled court, to answer
Their weighty charges artfully arranged.
—They came like ghosts—like ghosts they disappeared,
And since that day all mouths are closed to me.
In vain I seek to construe from your looks

Which hath prevail'd—my cause's innocence
And my friends' zeal—or my foes' cursed counsel.
O! break this silence—let me know the worst—
What I have still to fear, and what to hope.

PAUL. Close your accounts with heaven.

MARY. From heaven I hope
For mercy, Sir;—and from my earthly judges
I hope, and still expect, the strictest justice.

PAUL. Justice, depend upon it, will be done you.

MARY. Is the suit ended, Sir?

PAULET. I cannot tell.

MARY. Am I condemn'd?

PAULET. I cannot answer, Lady.

MARY. [Sir, a good work fears not the light of day.

PAUL. The day will shine upon it, doubt it not.]

MARY. Despatch is here the fashion. Is it meant
The murderer shall surprise me, like the judges?

PAUL. Still entertain that thought, and he will find you
Better prepared to meet your fate than they did.

MARY (*after a pause*).
Sir, nothing can surprise me which a court,
Inspired by Burleigh's hate and Hatton's zeal,
Howe'er unjust, may venture to pronounce:—
But I have yet to learn how far the Queen
Will dare in execution of the sentence.

PAUL. The sovereigns of England have no fear
But for their conscience and their parliament.
What justice hath decreed, her fearless hand
Will execute before th' assembled world.

SCENE III.

The same. MORTIMER *enters, and without paying attention to the* QUEEN, *addresses* PAULET.

MORT. Uncle, you're sought for.

[*He retires in the same manner. The* QUEEN *remarks it, and turns towards* PAULET, *who is about to follow him.*

MARY. Sir, one favor more :—
If *you* have aught to say to me—from *you*
I can bear much—I rev'rence your grey hairs—
But cannot bear that young man's insolence ;—
Spare me in future his unmanner'd rudeness.

PAUL. I prize him most for that which makes you hate him :—
He is not, truly, one of those poor fools
Who melt before a woman's treacherous tears.
He has seen much—has been to Rheims and Paris,
And brings us back his true old English heart.
Lady, your cunning arts are lost on him. [*Exit.*

SCENE IV.

MARY, KENNEDY.

KEN. And dares the ruffian venture to your face
Such language !—O, 'tis hard—'tis past endurance.

MARY (*lost in reflection*).
In the fair moments of our former splendor
We lent to flatt'rers a too willing ear ;—
It is but just, good Hannah, we should now
Be forced to hear the bitter voice of censure.

KEN. So downcast, so depressed, my dearest Lady !
You, who before so gay, so full of hope,
Were used to comfort me in my distress ?
More gracious were the task to check your mirth
Than chide your heavy sadness.

MARY. Well I know him—
It is the bleeding Darnley's royal shade,
Rising in anger from his darksome grave :

And never will he make his peace with me
Until the measure of my woes be full.

KEN. What thoughts are these—

MARY. Thou may'st forget it, Hannah;
But I've a faithful mem'ry—'tis this day
Another wretched anniversary
Of that regretted, that unhappy deed—
Which I must celebrate with fast and penance.

KEN. Dismiss at length in peace this evil spirit.
The penitence of many a heavy year,
Of many a suffering, has atoned the deed:
The Church, which holds the key of absolution,
Pardons the crime, and heav'n itself's appeas'd.

MARY. This long-atoned crime arises fresh
And bleeding from its lightly-cover'd grave—
My husband's restless spirit seeks revenge—
No sacred bell can exorcise, no host
In priestly hands dismiss it to his tomb.

KEN. You did not murder him—'twas done by others.

MARY. But it was known to me;—I suffer'd it,
And lured him with my smiles to death's embrace.

KEN. Your youth extenuates your guilt. You were
Of tender years.

MARY. So tender, yet I drew
This heavy guilt upon my youthful head.

KEN. You were provok'd by direst injuries,
And by the rude presumption of the man,
Whom out of darkness, like the hand of heav'n,
Your love drew forth, and raised above all others;
Whom through your bridal chamber you conducted
Up to your throne, and with your lovely self,
And your hereditary crown, distinguish'd:—
[Your work was his existence, and your grace

Bedew'd him like the gentle rains of heav'n.]
Could he forget that his so splendid lot
Was the creation of your gen'rous love?
Yet did he, worthless as he was, forget it.
With base suspicions, and with brutal manners,
He wearied your affections, and became
An object to you of deserv'd disgust:—
Th' illusion, which till now had overcast
Your judgment, vanish'd; angrily you fled
His foul embrace, and gave him up to scorn.
And did he seek again to win your love?
Your favor? Did he e'er implore your pardon?
Or fall in deep repentance at your feet?
No; the base wretch defied you:—he, who was
Your bounty's creature, wish'd to play your king,
[And stroye, through fear, to force your inclination.]
Before your eyes he had your fav'rite singer,
Poor Rizzio, murder'd: you did but avenge
With blood, the bloody deed———

MARY. And bloodily,
I fear, too soon 'twill be aveng'd on me:—
You seek to comfort me, and you condemn me.

KEN. You were, when you consented to this deed,
No more yourself—belong'd not to yourself—
The madness of a frantic love possess'd you,
And bound you to a terrible seducer,
The wretched Bothwell. That despotic man
Rul'd you with shameful, overbearing will,
And with his philters and his hellish arts
Inflamed your passions.

MARY. All the arts he used
Were man's superior strength, and woman's weakness.

KEN. No, no, I say. The most pernicious spirits
Of hell he must have summoned to his aid,
To cast this mist before your waking senses.
Your ear no more was open to the voice
Of friendly warning, and your eyes were shut
To decency; soft female bashfulness
Deserted you; those cheeks, which were before
The seat of virtuous blushing modesty,
Glow'd with the flames of unrestrained desire;
You cast away the veil of secrecy,
And the flagitious daring of the man
O'ercame your natural coyness: you expos'd
Your shame, unblushingly, to public gaze:
You let the murd'rer, whom the people follow'd
With curses, through the streets of Edinburgh,
Before you bear the royal sword of Scotland
In triumph. You begirt your parliament
With armed bands; and by this shameless farce,
There, in the very temple of great Justice,
You forc'd the judges of the land to clear
The murderer of his guilt. You went still further—
O God!

MARY. Conclude—nay, pause not—say for this
I gave my hand in marriage at the altar.

KEN. O let an everlasting silence veil
That dreadful deed: the heart revolts at it,
A crime to stain the darkest criminal!
Yet you are no such lost one, that I know.
I nurs'd your youth myself—your heart is fram'd
For tender softness: 'tis alive to shame,
And all your fault is thoughtless levity.
Yes, I repeat it, there are evil spirits,
Who sudden fix in man's unguarded breast

Their fatal residence, and there delight
To act their dev'lish deeds; then hurry back
Unto their native hell, and leave behind
Remorse and horror in the poison'd bosom.
Since this misdeed, which blackens thus your life,
You have done nothing ill; your conduct has
Been pure; myself can witness your amendment.
Take courage, then; with your own heart make peace.
Whatever cause you have for penitence,
You are not guilty here. Nor England's Queen,
Nor England's parliament can be your judge.
Here *might* oppresses you: you may present
Yourself before this self-created court
With all the fortitude of innocence.

MARY. I hear a step.

KENNEDY. It is the nephew—In.

SCENE V.

The same. Enter MORTIMER, *approaching cautiously.*

MORTIMER (*to* KENNEDY).
Step to the door, and keep a careful watch,
I have important business with the Queen.

MARY (*with dignity*).
I charge thee, Hannah, go not hence—remain.

MORT. Fear not, my gracious Lady—learn to know me.
[*He gives her a card.*

MARY. [*She examines it, and starts back astonished.*
Heav'ns! What is this?

MORTIMER (*to* KENNEDY). Retire, good Kennedy:
See that my uncle comes not unawares.

MARY (*to* KENNEDY, *who hesitates, and looks at the* QUEEN *inquiringly*).

Go in; do as he bids you.

[KENNEDY *retires with signs of wonder.*

SCENE VI.

MARY, MORTIMER.

MARY. From my uncle
In France—the worthy Card'nal of Lorrain?
[*She reads.*
"Confide in Mortimer, who brings you this;
You have no truer, firmer friend in England."
[*Looking at him with astonishment.*
Can I believe it? Is there no delusion
To cheat my senses? Do I find a friend
So near, when I conceiv'd myself abandon'd
By the whole world? And find that friend in you,
The nephew of my gaoler, whom I thought
My most invet'rate enemy?

MORTIMER (*kneeling*). O pardon,
My gracious Liege, for the detested mask,
Which it has cost me pain enough to wear;
Yet through such means alone have I the pow'r
To see you, and to bring you help and rescue.

MARY. Arise, Sir; you astonish me; I cannot
So suddenly emerge from the abyss
Of wretchedness to hope: let me conceive
This happiness, that I may credit it.

MORT. Our time is brief: each moment I expect
My uncle, whom a hated man attends:
Hear, then, before his terrible commission
Surprises you, how Heav'n prepares your rescue.

MARY. You come, in token of its wondrous pow'r.

MORT. Allow me of myself to speak.

MARY. Say on.

MORT. I scarce, my Liege, had numbered twenty years,
Train'd in the path of strictest discipline,
And nurs'd in deadliest hate to Papacy,
When, led by irresistible desire
For foreign travel, I resolv'd to leave
My country and its puritanic faith
Far, far behind me: soon with rapid speed
I flew through France, and bent my eager course
On to the plains of far-famed Italy.
'Twas then the time of the great Jubilee,
And crowds of palmers fill'd the public roads;
Each image was adorn'd with garlands; 'twas
As if all human-kind were wand'ring forth
In pilgrimage towards the heav'nly kingdom.
The tide of the believing multitude
Bore me, too, onward, with resistless force,
Into the streets of Rome. What was my wonder,
As the magnificence of stately columns
Rush'd on my sight! The vast triumphal arches,
The Colosseum's grandeur, with amazement
Struck my admiring senses; the sublime
Creative spirit held my soul a prisoner
In the fair world of wonders it had fram'd.
I ne'er had felt the power of art till now.
The Church that rear'd me hates the charms of sense;
It tolerates no image, it adores
But the unseen, the incorporeal word.
What were my feelings, then, as I approach'd
The threshold of the churches, and within
Heard heav'nly music floating in the air:
While from the walls and high-wrought roofs there
stream'd
Crowds of celestial forms in endless train—

When the Most High, Most Glorious, pervaded
My captivated sense in real presence!
And when I saw the great and godlike visions,
The Salutation, the Nativity,
The Holy Mother, and the Trinity's
Descent, the luminous Transfiguration,
And last the holy Pontiff, clad in all
The glory of his office, bless the people,—
O! what is all the pomp of gold and jewels
With which the kings of earth adorn themselves!
He is alone surrounded by the Godhead;
His mansion is in truth an heav'nly kingdom,
For not of earthly moulding are these forms!

MARY. O spare me, Sir! No further. Spread no more
Life's verdant carpet out before my eyes.
Remember I am wretched, and a prisoner.

MORT. I was a prisoner, too, my Queen; but swift
My prison-gates flew open, when at once
My spirit felt its liberty, and hail'd
The smiling dawn of life. I learn'd to burst
Each narrow prejudice of education,
To crown my brows with never-fading wreaths,
And mix my joy with the rejoicing crowd.
Full many noble Scots, who saw my zeal,
Encourag'd me, and with the gallant French
They kindly led me to your princely uncle,
The Cardinal of Guise. O what a man!
How firm, how clear, how manly, and how great!
Born to control the human mind at will!
The very model of a royal priest;
A ruler of the Church without an equal!

MARY. You've seen him then,—the much lov'd, honor'd man,

Who was the guardian of my tender years!
O speak of him! Does he remember me?
Does fortune favor him? And prospers still
His life? And does he still majestic stand,
A very rock and pillar of the Church?

MORT. The holy man descended from his height,
And deign'd to teach me the important creed
Of the true Church, and dissipate my doubts.
He show'd me how the glimm'ring light of reason
Serves but to lead us to eternal error:
That what the heart is call'd on to believe,
The eye must see: that he who rules the Church
Must needs be visible; and that the Spirit
Of truth inspir'd the Councils of the Fathers.
How vanish'd, then, the fond imaginings
And weak conceptions of my childish soul
Before his conquering judgment and the soft
Persuasion of his tongue! So I return'd
Back to the bosom of the holy Church,
And at his feet abjur'd my heresies.

MARY. Then of those happy thousands, you are one
Whom he, with his celestial eloquence,
Like the immortal preacher of the mount,
Has turn'd, and led to everlasting joy!

MORT. The duties of his office call'd him soon
To France, and I was sent by him to Rheims,
Where, by the Jesuits' anxious labor, priests
Are train'd to preach our holy faith in England.
There, 'mongst the Scots, I found the noble Morgan
And your true Lesley, Ross's learned bishop,
Who pass in France their joyless days of exile.
I join'd with heartfelt zeal these worthy men,
And fortified my faith. As I one day

Roam'd through the Bishop's dwelling, I was struck
With a fair female portrait. It was full
Of touching, wond'rous charms; with magic might
It mov'd my inmost soul, and there I stood
Speechless, and overmaster'd by my feelings.
"Well," cried the Bishop, "may you linger thus
In deep emotion near this lovely face!
For the most beautiful of womankind
Is also matchless in calamity.
She is a prisoner for our holy faith,
And in your native land, alas! she suffers."

[MARY *is in great agitation.—He pauses.*

MARY. Excellent man! All is not lost, indeed,
While such a friend remains in my misfortunes!

MORT. Then he began, with moving eloquence,
To paint the suff'rings of your martyrdom;
He showed me, then, your lofty pedigree,
And your descent from Tudor's royal House.
He prov'd to me that you alone have right
To reign in England, not this upstart Queen,
The base-born fruit of an adult'rous bed,
Whom Henry's self rejected as a bastard.
[He from my eyes remov'd delusion's mist,
And taught me to lament you as a victim,
To honor you as my true Queen, whom I,
Deceiv'd, like thousands of my noble fellows,
Had ever hated as my country's foe.]
I would not trust his evidence alone;
I question'd learned doctors; I consulted
The most authentic books of heraldry;
And every man of knowledge, whom I ask'd,
Confirm'd to me your claim's validity.
And now I know that your undoubted right

To England's throne has been your only wrong.
This realm is justly yours by heritage,
In which you innocently pine as pris'ner.

MARY. O this unhappy right!—'tis this alone
Which is the source of all my sufferings.

MORT. Just at this time the tidings reached my ears
Of your removal from old Talbot's charge,
And your committal to my uncle's care.
It seem'd to me that this disposal mark'd
The wondrous, outstretch'd hand of fav'ring Heaven:
It seem'd to be a loud decree of fate,
That it had chosen me to rescue you.
My friends concur with me; the Cardinal
Bestows on me his counsel and his blessing,
And tutors me in the hard task of feigning.
The plan in haste digested, I commenced
My journey homewards, and ten days ago
On England's shores I landed.—Oh, my Queen,
[*He pauses.*
I saw then not your picture, but yourself—
Oh, what a treasure do these walls enclose!
No prison this, but the abode of gods,
More splendid far than England's royal Court.
Happy, thrice happy he whose envied lot
Permits to breathe the selfsame air with you!
It is a prudent policy in her
To bury you so deep! All England's youth
Would rise at once in general mutiny,
And not a sword lie quiet in its sheath:
Rebellion would uprear its giant head
Through all this peaceful isle, if Britons once
Beheld their captive Queen.

MARY. 'Twere well with her,
If ev'ry Briton saw her with your eyes!
MORT. Were each, like me, a witness of your wrongs,
Your meekness, and the noble fortitude
With which you suffer these indignities—
Would you not then emerge from all these trials
Like a true Queen? Your prison's infamy,
Hath it despoil'd your beauty of its charms?
You are depriv'd of all that graces life,
Yet round you life and light eternal beam.
Ne'er on this threshold can I set my foot,
That my poor heart with anguish is not torn,
Not ravish'd with delight at gazing on you.
Yet fearfully the fatal time draws near,
And danger hourly growing presses on.
I can delay no longer—can no more
Conceal the dreadful news.
MARY. My sentence, then!
Is it pronounc'd? Speak freely—I can bear it.
MORT. It is pronounc'd! The two-and-forty judges
Have giv'n the verdict, "guilty;" and the Houses
Of Lords and Commons, with the citizens
Of London, eagerly and urgently
Demand the execution of the sentence:—
The Queen alone still craftily delays,
That she may be constrained to yield, but not
From feelings of humanity or mercy.
MARY (*collected*).
Sir, I am not surpris'd nor terrified.
I have been long prepar'd for such a message.
Too well I know my judges. After all
Their cruel treatment, I can well conceive
They dare not now restore my liberty.

I know their aim: they mean to keep me here
In everlasting bondage, and to bury,
In the sepulchral darkness of my prison,
My vengeance with me, and my rightful claims.

MORT. O! no, my gracious Queen;—they stop not there!
Oppression will not be content to do
Its work by halves:—as long as e'er you live
Distrust and fear will haunt the English Queen.
No dungeon can inter you deep enough;
Your death alone can make her throne secure.

MARY. Will she then dare, regardless of the shame,
Lay my crown'd head upon the fatal block?

MORT. She will most surely dare it, doubt it not.

MARY. And can she thus roll in the very dust
Her own and ev'ry monarch's majesty?

MORT. She thinks on nothing now put present danger,
Nor looks to that which is so far removed.

MARY. And fears she not the dread revenge of France?

MORT. With France she makes an everlasting peace,
And gives to Anjou's Duke her throne and hand.

MARY. Will not the King of Spain rise up in arms?

MORT. She fears not a collected world in arms,
If with her people she remain at peace.

MARY. Were this a spectacle for British eyes?

MORT. This land, my Queen, has in these latter days
Seen many a royal woman from the throne
Descend and mount the scaffold:—her own mother
And Cath'rine Howard trod this fatal path.
And was not Lady Grey a crowned head?

MARY (*after a pause*).
No, Mortimer, vain fears have blinded you;
'Tis but the honest care of your true heart
Which conjures up these empty apprehensions.

It is not, Sir, the scaffold that I fear:
There are so many still and secret means
By which her Majesty of England may
Set all my claims to rest. O, trust me, ere
An executioner is found for me,
Assassins will be hir'd to do their work.
'Tis that which makes me tremble, Mortimer:
I never lift the goblet to my lips
Without an inward shudd'ring lest the draught
May have been mingled by my sister's love.

MORT. No:—neither open nor disguised murder
Shall e'er prevail against you:—fear no more;
All is prepar'd; twelve nobles of the land
Are my confed'rates, and have pledg'd to-day,
Upon the Sacrament, their faith to free you,
With dauntless arm, from this captivity.
Count Aubespine, the French Ambassador,
Knows of our plot, and offers his assistance:
'Tis in his palace that we hold our meetings.

MARY. You make me tremble, Sir, but not for joy;
An evil boding penetrates my heart.
Know you, then, what you risk? Are you not scar'd
By Babington and Tichburn's bloody heads,
Set up as warnings upon London's bridge?
Nor by the ruin of those many victims
Who have in such attempts found certain death,
And only made my chains the heavier?
Fly hence, deluded, most unhappy youth!
Fly, if there yet be time for you, before
That crafty spy, Lord Burleigh, track your schemes,
And mix his traitors in your secret plots.
Fly hence;—as yet, success hath never smil'd

On Mary Stuart's champions.

MORTIMER. I'm not scar'd
By Babington and Tichburn's bloody heads,
Set up as warnings upon London's bridge,
Nor by the ruin of those many victims
Who have in such attempts found certain death:
They also found therein immortal honor,
And death, in rescuing you, is dearest bliss.

MARY. It is vain: nor force nor guile can save me:—
My enemies are watchful, and the pow'r
Is in their hands. It is not Paulet only
And his dependent host; all England guards
My prison gates; Elizabeth's free will
Alone can open them.

MORTIMER. Expect not that.

MARY. One man alone on earth can open them.

MORT. O! let me know his name!

MARY. Lord Leicester.

MORTIMER. He!

[*Starts back in wonder.*

The Earl of Leicester! Your most bloody foe,
The fav'rite of Elizabeth!—through him—

MARY. If I am to be sav'd at all, 'twill be
Through him, and him alone. Go to him, Sir;
Freely confide in him: and, as a proof
You come from me, present this paper to him.

[*She takes a paper from her bosom;* MORTIMER *draws back, and hesitates to take it.*

It doth contain my portrait:—take it, Sir;
I've borne it long about me: but your uncle's
Close watchfulness has cut me off from all
Communication with him;—you were sent
By my good angel. [*He takes it.*

MORTIMER. O, my Queen! explain
This mystery.
MARY. Lord Leicester will resolve it.
Confide in him, and he'll confide in you.
Who comes?
KENNEDY (*entering hastily*).
'Tis Paulet; and he brings with him
A nobleman from court.
MORTIMER. It is Lord Burleigh.
Collect yourself, my Queen, and strive to hear
The news he brings with equanimity.
[*He retires through a side door, and* KENNEDY *follows him.*

SCENE VII.

Enter LORD BURLEIGH, *and* PAULET.

PAULET (*to* MARY).
You wish'd, to-day, assurance of your fate;
My Lord of Burleigh brings it to you now.
Hear it with resignation, as beseems you.
MARY. I hope with dignity, as it becomes
My innocence, and my exalted station.
BUR. I come deputed from the court of justice.
MARY. Lord Burleigh lends that court his willing tongue,
Which was already guided by his spirit.
PAUL. You speak as if no stranger to the sentence.
MARY. Lord Burleigh brings it; therefore do I know it.
PAUL. [It would become you better, Lady Stuart,
To listen less to hatred.
MARY. I but name
My enemy: I said not that I hate him.]
But to the matter, Sir.

BURLEIGH. You have acknowledg'd
The jurisdiction of the two-and-forty.
MARY. My Lord, excuse me, if I am oblig'd
So soon to interrupt you. I acknowledg'd,
Say you, the competence of the commission?
I never have acknowledg'd it, my Lord;
How could I so? I could not give away
My own prerogative, th' intrusted rights
Of my own people, the inheritance
Of my own son, and ev'ry monarch's honor
[The very laws of England say I could not].
It is enacted by the English laws
That ev'ry one who stands arraign'd of crime
Shall plead before a jury of his equals:
Who is my equal in this high commission?
Kings only are my peers.
BURLEIGH. But yet you heard
The points of accusation, answer'd them
Before the court——
MARY. 'Tis true, I was deceiv'd
By Hatton's crafty counsel:—he advis'd me,
For my own honor, and in confidence
In my good cause, and my most strong defence,
To listen to the points of accusation,
And prove their falsehood. *This*, my Lord, I did
From personal respect for the lords' names,
Not their usurped charge, which I disclaim.
BUR. Acknowledge you the court, or not, that is
Only a point of mere formality,
Which cannot here arrest the course of justice.
You breathe the air of England; you enjoy
The law's protection, and its benefits;
You therefore are its subject.

MARY. Sir, I breathe
The air within an English-prison walls:—
Is that to live in England; to enjoy
Protection from its laws? I scarcely know
And never have I pledg'd my faith to keep them.
I am no member of this realm; I am
An independent, and a foreign Queen.

BUR. And do you think that the mere name of Queen
Can serve you as a charter to foment
In other countries, with impunity,
This bloody discord? Where would be the state's
Security, if the stern sword of justice
Could not as freely smite the guilty brow
Of the imperial stranger as the beggar's?

MARY. I do not wish to be exempt from judgment,
It is the judges only I disclaim.

BUR. The judges? How now, Madam! Are they, then,
Base wretches, snatch'd at hazard from the crowd;
Vile wranglers, that make sale of truth and justice?
Oppression's willing hirelings, and its tools?
Are they not all the foremost of this land,
Too independent to be else than honest,
And too exalted not to soar above
The fear of Kings or base servility?
Are they not those who rule a gen'rous people
In liberty and justice; men whose names
I need but mention to dispel each doubt,
Each mean suspicion which is rais'd against them?
Stands not the rev'rend Primate at their head,
The pious shepherd of his faithful people,
The learned Talbot, Keeper of the Seals,
And Howard, who commands our conqu'ring fleets?
Say, then, could England's sovereign do more

Than, out of all the monarchy, elect
The very noblest, and appoint them judges
In this great suit? And were it probable
That party hatred could corrupt *one* heart,
Can forty chosen men unite to speak
A sentence just as passion gives command?

MARY (*after a short pause*).

I am struck dumb by that tongue's eloquence,
Which ever was so ominous to me.
And how shall I, a weak, untutor'd woman,
Cope with so subtle, learn'd an orator?
Yes, truly, were these lords as you describe them,
I must be mute; my cause were lost indeed,
Beyond all hope, if they pronounc'd me guilty.
But, Sir, these names, which you are pleas'd to praise,
These very men, whose weight you think will crush me,
I see performing, in the history
Of these dominions, very different parts:
I see this high nobility of England,
This grave majestic senate of the realm,
Like to an eastern monarch's vilest slaves,
Flatter my uncle Henry's sultan fancies:
I see this noble rev'rend House of Lords,
Venal alike with the corrupted Commons,
Make statutes and annul them, ratify
A marriage and dissolve it, as the voice
Of power commands: to-day it disinherits,
And brands the royal daughters of the realm
With the vile name of bastards, and to-morrow
Crowns them as queens, and leads them to the throne.

I see them in four reigns, with pliant conscience,
Four times abjure their faith; renounce the Pope
With Henry, yet retain the old belief;
Reform themselves with Edward; hear the mass
Again with Mary; with Elizabeth,
Who governs now, reform themselves again.

BUR. You say you are not vers'd in England's laws;
You seem well read, methinks, in her disasters.

MARY. And these men are my judges?

[*As* LORD BURLEIGH *seems to wish to speak.*

My Lord Treas'rer,
Tow'rds you I will be just, be you but just
To me.—'Tis said that you consult with zeal
The good of England, and of England's Queen;
Are honest, watchful, indefatigable:
I will believe it. Not your private ends,
Your Sovereign and your country's weal alone,
Inspire your counsels and direct your deeds.
Therefore, my noble Lord, you should the more
Distrust your heart; should see that you mistake not
The welfare of the government for justice.
I do not doubt, besides yourself, there are
Among my judges many upright men:
But they are Protestants, are eager all
For England's quiet, and they sit in judgment
On me, the Queen of Scotland, and the Papist.
It is an ancient saying that the Scots
And English to each other are unjust;
And hence the rightful custom that a Scot
Against an Englishman, or Englishman
Against a Scot, cannot be heard in judgment.
Necessity prescrib'd this cautious law;
Deep policy oft lies in ancient customs:

My Lord, we must respect them. Nature cast
Into the ocean these two fiery nations
Upon this plank, and she divided it
Unequally, and bade them fight for it.
The narrow bed of Tweed alone divides
These daring spirits; often hath the blood
Of the contending parties dyed its waves.
Threat'ning, and sword in hand, these thousand years,
From both its banks they watch their rival's motions,
Most vigilant and true confederates,
With ev'ry en'my of the neighbor state.
No foe oppresses England, but the Scot
Becomes his firm ally; no civil war
Inflames the towns of Scotland, but the English
Add fuel to the fire: this raging hate
Will never be extinguish'd till, at last,
One parliament in concord shall unite them,
One common sceptre rule throughout the isle.

BUR. And from a Stuart, then, should England hope
This happiness?

MARY. O! why should I deny it?
Yes, I confess, I cherish'd the fond hope,
I thought myself the happy instrument
To join in freedom, 'neath the olive's shade,
Two gen'rous realms in lasting happiness!
I little thought I should become the victim
Of their old hate, their long-liv'd jealousy,
And the sad flames of that unhappy strife
I hop'd at last to smother, and forever:
And, as my ancestor, great Richmond, join'd
The rival roses after bloody contest,

To join in peace the Scotch and English crowns.

BUR. An evil way you took to this good end,
To set the realm on fire, and through the flames
Of civil war to strive to mount the throne.

MARY. I wish'd not that:—I wish'd it not, by Heaven!
When did I strive at that?—Where are your proofs?

BUR. I came not hither to dispute; your cause
Is no more subject to a war of words.
The great majority of forty voices
Hath found that you have contraven'd the law
Last year enacted, and have now incurr'd
Its penalty. [*Producing the verdict.*

MARY. Upon this statute, then,
My Lord, is built the verdict of my judges?

BURLEIGH (*reading*).
Last year it was enacted, "If a plot
Henceforth should rise in England, in the name
Or for the benefit of any claimant
To England's crown, that justice should be done
On such pretender, and the guilty party
Be prosecuted unto death." Now, since
It has been prov'd——

MARY. Lord Burleigh, I can well
Imagine that a law expressly aim'd
At me, and fram'd to compass my destruction,
May to my prejudice be used. O! woe
To the unhappy victim, when the tongue
That frames the law shall execute the sentence.
Can you deny it, Sir, that this same statute
Was made for my destruction, and nought else?

BUR. It should have acted as a warning to you:
By your imprudence it became a snare.
You saw the precipice which yawn'd before you;

Yet, truly warn'd, you plung'd into the deep.
With Babington, the traitor, and his bands
Of murderous companions were you leagued.
You knew of all, and from your prison led
Their treasonous plottings with a deep-laid plan.

MARY. When did I that, my Lord? Let them produce
The documents.

BURLEIGH. You have already seen them:
They were, before the court, presented to you.

MARY. Mere copies written by another hand;
Show me the proof that they were dictated
By me, that they proceeded from my lips,
And in those very terms in which you read them.

BUR. Before his execution, Babington
Confess'd they were the same which he receiv'd.

MARY. Why was he in his lifetime not produc'd
Before my face? Why was he then despatch'd
So quickly that he could not be confronted
With her whom he accus'd?

BURLEIGH. Besides, my Lady,
Your secretaries, Curl and Nau, declare
On oath they are the very selfsame letters
Which, from your lips, they faithfully transcrib'd.

MARY. And on my menials' testimony, then,
I am condemn'd; upon the word of those
Who have betray'd me, *me*, their rightful Queen,
Who in that very moment when they came
As witnesses against me broke their faith!

BUR. You said yourself you held your countryman
To be an upright, conscientious man.

MARY. I thought him such; but 'tis the hour of danger
Alone which tries the virtue of a man.
[He ever was an honest man, but weak

In understanding; and his subtle comrade,
Whose faith, observe, I never answer'd for,
Might easily seduce him to write down
More than he should;] the rack may have compell'd him
To say and to confess more than he knew.
He hop'd to save himself by this false witness,
And thought it could not injure *me*—a Queen.

BUR. The oath he swore was free and unconstrain'd.

MARY. But not before my face! How now, my Lord?
The witnesses you name are still alive;
Let them appear against me, face to face,
And there repeat what they have testified!
Why am I, then, denied that privilege,
That right, which e'en the murderer enjoys?
I know from Talbot's mouth, my former keeper,
That in this reign a statute has been pass'd
Which orders that the plaintiff be confronted
With the defendant; is it so, good Paulet?
I e'er have known you as an honest man,
Now prove it to me; tell me, on your conscience,
If such a law exist, or not, in England?

PAUL. Madam, there does: that is the law in England.
I must declare the truth.

MARY. Well then, my Lord,
If I am treated by the law of England
So hardly, when that law oppresses me,
Say, why avoid this selfsame country's law
When 'tis for my advantage? Answer me;
Why was not Babington confronted with me?
Why not my servants, who are both alive?

BUR. Be not so hasty, Lady; 'tis not only
Your plot with Babington——

MARY. 'Tis that alone
Which arms the law against me ; that alone
From which I'm call'd upon to clear myself.
Stick to the point, my Lord ; evade it not.
BUR. It has been prov'd that you have corresponded
With the Ambassador of Spain, Mendoza——
MARY. Stick to the point, my Lord.
BURLEIGH. That you have form'd
Conspiracies to overturn the fix'd
Religion of the realm ; that you have call'd
Into this kingdom foreign pow'rs, and rous'd
All kings in Europe to a war with England.
MARY. And were it so, my Lord—though I deny it—
But e'en suppose it were so : I am kept
Imprison'd here against all laws of nations.
I came not into England sword in hand ;
I came a suppliant ; and at the hands
Of my imperial kinswoman I claim'd
The sacred rights of hospitality,
When power seized upon me, and prepared
To rivet fetters, where I hop'd protection.
Say, is my conscience bound, then, to this realm?
What are the duties that I owe to England?
I should but exercise a sacred right,
Deriv'd from sad necessity, if I
Warr'd with these bonds, encounter'd might with might,
Roused and incited ev'ry state in Europe,
For my protection, to unite in arms
Whatever in a rightful war is just
And loyal, 'tis my right to exercise :
Murder alone, the secret, bloody deed,
My conscience and my pride alike forbid.

Murder would stain me, would dishonor me:
Dishonor me, my Lord!—but not condemn me,
Nor subject me to England's courts of law:
For 'tis not justice, but mere violence,
Which is the question 'tween myself and England.

BURLEIGH (*significantly*).
Talk not, my Lady, of the dreadful right
Of pow'r: 'tis seldom on the pris'ner's side.

MARY. I am the weak: she is the mighty one:
'Tis well, my Lord; let her, then, use her pow'r;
Let her destroy me: let me bleed, that she
May live secure: but let her then confess
That she hath exercised her pow'r alone,
And not contaminate the name of justice.
Let her not borrow from the laws the sword
To rid her of her hated enemy:
Let her not clothe in this religious garb
The bloody daring of licentious might:
Let not these juggling tricks deceive the world.—
[*Returning the sentence.*
Though she may murder me, she cannot judge me:—
Let her no longer strive to join the fruits
Of vice with virtue's fair and angel show;
But let her dare to seem the thing she is. [*Exit.*

SCENE VIII.

BURLEIGH, PAULET.

BUR. She scorns us, she defies us! will defy us,
Ev'n at the scaffold's foot. This haughty heart
Is not to be subdued. Say, did the sentence
Surprise her? Did you see her shed one tear,
Or even change her color? She disdains
To make appeal to our compassion. Well

She knows the wav'ring mind of England's Queen.
Our apprehensions make her bold.

PAULET. My Lord
Take the pretext away which buoys it up,
And you shall see this proud defiance fail
That very moment. I must say, my Lord,
Irregularities have been allowed
In these proceedings; Babington and Ballard
Should have been brought, with her two secretaries,
Before her, face to face.

BURLEIGH. No, Paulet, no!
That was not to be risk'd; her influence
Upon the human heart is too supreme;
Too strong the female empire of her tears.
Her secretary, Curl, if brought before her,
And call'd upon to speak the weighty word
On which her life depends, would straight shrink back,
And fearfully revoke his own confession.

PAUL. Then England's enemies will fill the world
With evil rumors; and the formal pomp
Of these proceedings, to the minds of all,
Will only signalize an act of outrage.

BUR. That is the greatest torment of our Queen,
[That she can never 'scape the blame. O God!]
Had but this lovely mischief died before
She set her faithless foot on English ground!

PAUL. Amen, say I!

BURLEIGH. Had sickness but consumed her!

PAUL. England had been secur'd from much misfortune.

BUR. And yet, if she had died in nature's course,
The world would still have call'd us murderers.

PAUL. 'Tis true, the world think, despite of us,

Whate'er it list.

BURLEIGH. Yet could it not be prov'd?
And it would make less noise.

PAULET. Why let it make
What noise it may. It is not clam'rous blame,
'Tis righteous censure only, which can wound.

BUR. We know that holy justice cannot 'scape
The voice of censure; and the public cry
Is ever on the side of the unhappy:
Envy pursues the laurell'd conqueror;
The sword of justice which adorns the man
Is hateful in the woman's hand; the world
Will give no credit to a woman's justice,
If woman be the victim. Vain that we,
The judges, spoke what conscience dictated;
She has the royal privilege of mercy;
She *must* exert it: 'twere not to be borne,
Should she let justice take its full career.

PAUL. And therefore———

BURLEIGH. Therefore should she live? O! no,
She must not live; it must not be. 'Tis this,
Ev'n this, my friend, which so disturbs the Queen,
And scares all slumber from her couch; I read
Her soul's distracting contest in her eyes;
She fears to speak her wishes, yet her looks,
Her silent looks, significantly ask,
"Is there not one amongst my many servants
To save me from this sad alternative?
Either to tremble in eternal fear
Upon my throne, or else to sacrifice
A Queen of my own kindred on the block?"

PAUL. 'Tis even so; nor can it be avoided—

BUR. Well might it be avoided, thinks the Queen,

If she had only more attentive servants.

PAUL. How more attentive?

BURLEIGH. Such as could interpret
A silent mandate.

PAULET. What? A silent mandate!

BUR. Who, when a pois'nous adder is deliver'd
Into their hands, would keep the treach'rous charge
As if it were a sacred, precious jewel?

PAUL. A precious jewel is the Queen's good name,
And spotless reputation: good, my Lord,
One cannot guard it with sufficient care.

BUR. When, out of Shrewsb'ry's hand, the Queen of Scots
Was trusted to Sir Amias Paulet's care,
The meaning was———

PAULET. I hope to God, my Lord
The meaning was, to give the weightiest charge
Into the purest hands: my Lord, my Lord!
By Heav'n, I had disdain'd this bailiff's office,
Had I not thought the service claim'd the care
Of the best man that England's realm can boast.
Let me not think I am indebted for it
To any thing but my unblemish'd name.

BUR. Spread the report, she wastes; grows sicker still,
And sicker; and expires at last in peace;
Thus will she perish in the world's remembrance,
And your good name is pure.

PAULET. But not my conscience.

BUR. Though you refuse us, Sir, your own assistance,
You will not, sure, prevent another's hand.

PAUL. No murd'rer's foot shall e'er approach her threshold,
Whilst she's protected by my household gods.
Her life's a sacred trust; to me the head
Of Queen Elizabeth is not more sacred.

Ye are the judges; judge, and break the staff;
And when 'tis time, then let the carpenter,
With axe and saw appear to build the scaffold.
My castle's portals shall be open to him,
The sheriff and the executioners;
Till then, she is intrusted to my care;
And, be assur'd, I will fulfil my trust,
She shall nor *do*, nor *suffer* what's unjust. [*Exeunt.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.

London, a Hall in the Palace of Westminster.

The EARL OF KENT *and* SIR WILLIAM DAVISON, *meeting.*

DAV. Is that my Lord of Kent? So soon return'd?
Is then the tourney, the carousal over?
KENT. How now? Were you not present at the tilt?
DAV. My office kept me here.
KENT. Believe me, Sir,
You've lost the fairest show which ever taste
Devis'd, or graceful dignity perform'd:
For beauty's virgin fortress was presented,
As by *Desire* invested; the Earl Marshal,
The Lord High Admiral, and ten other knights,
Belonging to the Queen, defended it,
And France's Cavaliers led the attack.
A herald march'd before the gallant troop,
And summon'd, in a madrigal, the fortress;
And from the walls the Chancellor replied;
And then th' artillery was play'd, and nosegays
Breathing delicious fragrance, were discharg'd
From neat field-pieces; but in vain, the storm

Was valiantly resisted, and *Desire*
Was forc'd, unwillingly, to raise the siege.

DAV. A sign of evil boding, good, my Lord,
For the French suitors.

KENT. Why, you know that this
Was but in sport; when the attack's in earnest,
The fortress will, no doubt, capitulate.

DAV. Ha! think you so? I never can believe it.

KENT. The hardest article of all is now
Adjusted, and acceded to by France;
The Duke of Anjou is content to hold
His holy worship in a private chapel,
And openly he promises to honor
And to protect the realm's establish'd faith.
Had you but heard the people's joyful shouts
Where'er the tidings spread, for it has been
The country's constant fear the Queen might die
Without immediate issue of her body,
And England bear again the Romish chains
If Mary Stuart should ascend the throne.

DAV. This fear appears superfluous; she goes
Into the bridal chamber; Mary Stuart
Enters the gates of death.

KENT. The Queen approaches.

SCENE II.

Enter ELIZABETH, *led in by* LEICESTER, COUNT AUBESPINE, BELLIEVRE, LORDS SHREWSBURY *and* BURLEIGH, *with other French and English Gentlemen.*

ELIZABETH (*to* AUBESPINE).

Count, I am sorry for these noblemen,
Whose gallant zeal hath brought them over sea
To visit these our shores, that they, with us,

Must miss the splendor of St. Germain's court.
Such pompous festivals of godlike state
I cannot furnish, as the royal court
Of France. A sober and contented people,
Which crowd around me with a thousand blessings,
Whene'er in public I present myself:
This is the spectacle which I can show,
And not without some pride, to foreign eyes.
The splendor of the noble dames who bloom
In Cath'rine's beauteous garden would, I know,
Eclipse myself, and my more modest merits.

AUB. The court of England has one lady only,
To show the wond'ring foreigner; but all
That charms our hearts in the accomplish'd sex
Is seen united in her single person.

BEL. Great Majesty of England, suffer us
To take our leave, and to our royal master,
The Duke of Anjou, bring the happy news.
The hot impatience of his heart would not
Permit him to remain at Paris; he
At Amiens awaits the joyful tidings;
And thence to Calais reach his posts, to bring
With winged swiftness to his tranced ear
The sweet consent which, still we humbly hope,
Your royal lips will graciously pronounce.

ELIZ. Press me no further now, Count Bellievre,
It is not now a time, I must repeat,
To kindle here the joyful marriage torch.
The heav'ns low'r black and heavy o'er this land,
And weeds of mourning would become me better
Than the magnificence of bridal robes.
A fatal blow is aim'd against my heart;
A blow which threatens to oppress my House.

BEL. We only ask your Majesty to promise
Your royal hand when brighter days shall come.
ELIZ. Monarchs are but the slaves of their condition ;
They dare not hear the dictates of their hearts.
My wish was ever to remain unmarried,
And I had plac'd my greatest pride in this,
That men hereafter on my tomb might read
"Here rests the virgin Queen." But my good subjects
Are not content that this should be : they think,
E'en now they often think, upon the time
When I shall be no more. 'Tis not enough
That blessings now are shower'd upon this land;
They ask a sacrifice for future welfare,
And I must offer up my liberty,
My virgin liberty, my greatest good,
To satisfy my people. Thus they'd force
A lord and master on me. 'Tis by this
I see that I am nothing but a woman
In their regard ; and yet methought that I
Had govern'd like a man, and like a king.
Well wot I that it is not serving God
To quit the laws of nature ; and that those
Who here have rul'd before me merit praise,
That they have op'd the cloister gates, and giv'n
Thousands of victims of ill-taught devotion
Back to the duties of humanity.
But yet a Queen, who hath not spent her days
In fruitless, idle contemplation ; who,
Without a murmur, indefatigably
Performs the hardest of all duties ; *she*
Should be exempted, from that natural law
Which doth ordain one-half of human kind

Shall ever be subservient to the other.

AUB. Great Queen, you have upon your throne done honor
To ev'ry virtue ; nothing now remains
But to the sex, whose greatest boast you are,
To be the leading star, and give the great
Example of its most consistent duties.
'Tis true, the man exists not who deserves
That you to him should sacrifice your freedom;
Yet if a hero's soul, descent, and rank,
And manly beauty can make mortal man
Deserving of this honor—

ELIZABETH. Without doubt,
My Lord Ambassador, a marriage union
With France's royal son would do me honor:
Yes, I acknowledge it without disguise,
If it must be, if I cannot prevent it,
If I must yield unto my people's prayers,
And much I fear they will o'erpower me,
I do not know, in Europe, any prince
To whom with less reluctance I would yield
My greatest treasure, my dear liberty.
Let this confession satisfy your master.

BEL. It gives the *fairest* hope, and yet it gives
Nothing *but* hope ; my master wishes more.

ELIZ. What wishes he?

[*She takes a ring from her finger, and thoughtfully examines it.*

In this a Queen has not
One privilege above all other women.
This common token marks one common duty,
One common servitude ; the ring denotes
Marriage; and 'tis of rings a chain is form'd.

Convey this present to his Highness; 'tis
As yet no chain, it binds me not as yet,
But out of it may grow a link to bind me.

BELLIEVRE (*kneeling*).

This present, in his name, upon my knees,
I do receive, great Queen, and press the kiss
Of homage on the hand of her who is
Henceforth my princess.

ELIZABETH (*to the* EARL OF LEICESTER, *whom she, during the last speeches, had continually regarded*).

By your leave, my Lord.

[*She takes the blue riband from his neck,*[1] *and invests Bellievre with it.*

Invest his Highness with this ornament,
As I invest you with it, and receive you
Into the duties of my gallant order.
And "Honi soit qui mal y pense." Thus perish
All jealousy between our several realms,
And let the bond of confidence unite,
Henceforth, the crowns of Britain and of France.

BEL. Most sov'reign Queen, this is a day of joy;
O that it could be so for all, and no
Afflicted heart within this island mourn.
See! mercy beams upon thy radiant brow;
Let the reflection of its cheering light
Fall on a wretched princess, who concerns
Britain and France alike.

ELIZABETH. No further, Count!
Let us not mix two inconsistent things;
If France be truly anxious for my hand,

[1] Till the time of Charles the First, the Knights of the Garter wore the blue riband with the George, about their necks, as they still do the collars, on great days.—TRANSLATOR.

It must partake my interests, and renounce
Alliance with my foes.

AUBESPINE. In thine own eyes
Would she not seem to act unworthily
If, in this joyous treaty, she forgot
This hapless Queen, the widow of her king,
In whose behalf, her honor and her faith
Are bound to plead for grace?

ELIZABETH. Thus urged, I know
To rate this intercession at its worth;
France has discharged her duties as a friend,
I will fulfil my own as England's Queen.

[*She bows to the French Ambassadors, who, with the other Gentlemen, retire respectfully.*

SCENE III.

Enter BURLEIGH, LEICESTER, *and* TALBOT. *The* QUEEN *takes her seat.*

BUR. Illustrious sovereign, thou crown'st to-day
The fervent wishes of thy people: now
We can rejoice in the propitious days
Which thou bestow'st upon us; and we look
No more with fear and trembling tow'rds the time
Which, charg'd with storms, futurity presented
Now, but one only care disturbs this land;
It is a sacrifice which every voice
Demands; O! grant but this, and England's peace
Will be establish'd now and evermore.

ELIZ. What wish they still, my Lord? Speak.

BURLEIGH. They demand
The Stuart's head. If to thy people thou
Wouldst now secure the precious boon of freedom,

And the fair light of truth so dearly won,
Then she must die: if we are not to live
In endless terror for thy precious life,
The enemy must fall: for well thou know'st,
That all thy Britons are not true alike:
Romish Idolatry has still its friends
In secret, in this island, who foment
The hatred of our enemies. Their hearts
All turn towards this Stuart; they are leagu'd
With the two plotting brothers of Lorrain,
The foes invet'rate of thy house and name.
'Gainst thee this raging faction hath declar'd
A war of desolation, which they wage
With the deceitful instruments of hell.
At Rheims, the Cardinal Archbishop's see,
There is the arsenal from which they dart
These lightnings; *there* the school of regicide;
Thence, in a thousand shapes disguis'd, are sent
Their secret missionaries to this isle;
Their bold and daring zealots; far from *thence*
Have we not seen the third assassin come?
And inexhausted is the direful breed
Of secret enemies in *this* abyss.
While in her castle sits, at Fotheringay,
The *Até*[1] of this everlasting war,

[1] The picture of Até, the Goddess of mischief, we are acquainted with from Homer, Il. v. 91. 130. I. 501. She is a daughter of Jupiter, and eager to prejudice every one, even the immortal gods. She counteracted Jupiter himself, on which account he seized her by her beautiful hair, and hurled her from heaven to the earth, where she now, striding over the heads of men, excites them to evil, in order to involve them in calamity.—HERDER.

Shakespere has, in Julius Cæsar, made a fine use of this image:—

Who, with the torch of love, spreads flames around ;
For her who sheds delusive hopes on all,
Youth dedicates itself to certain death ;
To set her free is the pretence—the aim
Is to establish her upon the throne.
For this accursed House of Guise denies
Thy sacred right ; and in their mouths thou art
A robber of the throne, whom chance has crown'd,
By them this thoughtless woman was deluded,
Proudly to style herself the Queen of England :
No peace can be with her, and with her house ;
[Their hatred is too bloody, and their crimes
Too great ;] thou must resolve to strike, or suffer :—
Her life is death to thee, her death thy life.

ELIZ. My Lord, you bear a melancholy office :
I know the purity which guides your zeal,
The solemn wisdom which informs your speech :
And yet I hate this wisdom, when it calls
For blood, I hate it in my inmost soul.
Think of a milder counsel—Good, my Lord
Of Shrewsbury, we crave your judgment here.

TAL. [Desire you but to know, most gracious Queen.]
[What is for your advantage, I can add
Nothing to what my Lord High Treasurer
Has urged, than, for your welfare, let the sentence
Be now confirm'd—this much is prov'd already :
There is no surer method to avert
The danger from your head, and from the state.

"And Cæsar's spirit, ranging for revenge,
With Até by his side, come hot from hell,
Shall in these confines, with a monarch's voice
Cry havoc, and let slip the dogs of war."

I need not point out to the reader the beautiful propriety of introducing this evil spirit on this occasion.—TRANSLATOR.

Should you in this reject our true advice,
You can dismiss your council. We are plac'd
Here as your counsellors, but to consult
The welfare of this land, and with our knowledge,
And our experience, we are bound to serve you!
But in what's good and just, most gracious Queen,
You have no need of counsellors, your conscience
Knows it full well, and it is written there.
Nay it were overstepping our commission
If we attempted to instruct you in it.

ELIZ. Yet speak, my worthy Lord of Shrewsbury.
'Tis not our understanding fails alone,
Our heart, too, feels it wants some sage advice.]

TAL. Well did you praise the upright zeal which fires
Lord Burleigh's loyal breast; my bosom, too,
Although my tongue be not so eloquent,
Beats with no weaker, no less faithful pulse.
Long may you live, my Queen, to be the joy
Of your delighted people, to prolong
Peace and its envied blessings in this realm.
Ne'er hath this isle beheld such happy days
Since it was govern'd by its native kings.
O let it never buy its happiness
With its good name; at least, may Talbot's eyes
Be clos'd in death e'er this shall come to pass.

ELIZ. Forbid it, Heaven, that our good name be stain'd.

TAL. Then must you find some other way than this
To save thy kingdom, for the sentence pass'd
Of death against the Stuart is unjust.
You cannot upon her pronounce a sentence,
Who is not subject to you.

ELIZABETH. Then, it seems,
My council and my parliament have err'd;

Each bench of justice in the land is wrong,
Which did, with one accord, admit this right.

TALBOT (*after a pause*).

The proof of justice lies not in the voice
Of numbers; England's not the world, nor is
Thy parliament the focus, which collects
The vast opinion of the human race.
This present England is no more the future,
Than 'tis the past; as inclination changes,
Thus ever ebbs and flows the unstable tide
Of public judgment. Say not, then, that thou
Must act as stern necessity compels,
That thou must yield to the importunate
Petitions of thy people; ev'ry hour
Thou canst experience that thy will is free
Make trial, and declare, thou hatest blood,
And that thou wilt protect thy sister's life;
Show those who wish to give thee other counsels,
That *here* thy royal anger is not feign'd,
And thou shalt see how stern necessity
Can vanish, and what once was titled justice
Into injustice be converted: thou
Thyself must pass the sentence, thou alone:—
Trust not to this unsteady, trembling reed,
But hear the gracious dictates of thy heart.
God hath not planted rigor in the frame
Of woman: and the founders of this realm,
Who to the female hand have not denied
The reins of government, intend by this
To show that mercy, not severity,
Is the best virtue to adorn a crown.

ELIZ. Lord Shrewsb'ry is a fervent advocate
For mine and England's enemy; I must

Prefer those counsellors who wish *my* welfare.

TAL. Her advocates have an invidious task!
None will, by speaking in her favor, dare
To meet thy anger: suffer, then, an old
And faithful counsellor (whom nought on earth
Can tempt, on the grave's brink) to exercise
The pious duty of humanity.
It never shall be said, that, in thy council,
Passion and interest could find a tongue,
While mercy's pleading voice alone was mute.
All circumstances have conspir'd against her;
Thou ne'er hast seen her face, and nothing speaks
Within thy breast for one that 's stranger to thee.
I do not take the part of her misdeeds;
They say 'twas she who plann'd her husband's murder;
'Tis true that she espous'd his murderer.
A grievous crime, no doubt; but then it happen'd
In darksome days of trouble and dismay,
In the stern agony of civil war,
When she, a woman, helpless and hemm'd in
By a rude crowd of rebel vassals, sought
Protection in a powerful chieftain's arms.
God knows what arts were used to overcome her!
For woman is a weak and fragile thing.

ELIZ. Woman's not weak; there are heroic souls
Among the sex; and, in my presence, Sir,
I do forbid to speak of woman's weakness.

TAL. Misfortune was for thee a rigid school;
Thou wast not station'd on the sunny side
Of life; thou saw'st no throne, from far, before thee;
The grave was gaping for thee at thy feet.

At Woodstock, and in London's gloomy tower,
'Twas *there* the gracious father of this land
Taught thee to know thy duty, by misfortune.
No flatt'rer sought thee there: there learn'd thy soul,
Far from the noisy world and its distractions,
To commune with itself, to think apart,
And estimate the real goods of life.
No God protected this poor sufferer:
Transplanted in her early youth to France,
The Court of levity and thoughtless joys,
There, in the round of constant dissipation,
She never heard the earnest voice of truth;
She was deluded by the glare of vice,
And driven onward by the stream of ruin.
Hers was the vain possession of a face,
And she outshone all others of her sex
As far in beauty as in noble birth.

ELIZ. Collect yourself, my Lord of Shrewsbury;
Bethink you we are met in solemn council.
Those charms must surely be without compare
Which can engender, in an elder's blood,
Such fire. My Lord of Leicester, you alone
Are silent; does the subject which has made
Him eloquent deprive you of your speech?

LEIC. Amazement ties my tongue, my Queen, to think
That they should fill thy soul with such alarms,
And that the idle tales, which in the streets
Of London terrify the people's ears,
Should reach th' enlighten'd circle of thy council,
And gravely occupy our statesmen's minds.
Astonishment possesses me, I own,
To think this lackland Queen of Scotland, she

Who could not save her own poor throne, the jest
Of her own vassals and her country's refuse,
[Who in her fairest days of freedom was
But thy despised puppet,] should become
At once thy terror when a prisoner.
What, in Heaven's name, can make her formidable?
That she lays claim to England? that the Guises
Will not acknowledge thee as Queen? [Did then
Thy people's loyal fealty await
These Guises' approbation?] Can these Guises,
With their objections, ever shake the right
Which birth hath giv'n thee; which, with one consent,
The votes of parliament have ratified?
And is not she, by Henry's will, pass'd o'er
In silence? Is it probable that England,
As yet so bless'd in the new light's enjoyment,
Should throw itself into this papist's arms?
From thee, the sov'reign it adores, desert
To Darnley's murderess? What will they then,
These restless men, who even in thy lifetime
Torment thee with a successor; who cannot
Dispose of thee in marriage soon enough
To rescue church and state from fancied peril?
Stand'st thou not blooming there in youthful prime
While each step leads her tow'rds th' expecting tomb?
By Heavens! I hope thou wilt full many a year
Walk o'er the Stuart's grave, and ne'er become
Thyself the instrument of her sad end.

BUR. Lord Leicester hath not always held this tone.

LEIC. 'Tis true, I in the court of justice gave
My verdict for her death; here, in the council,

I may consistently speak otherwise:
Here right is not the question, but advantage.
Is this a time to fear her power, when France,
Her only succor, has abandon'd her?
When thou preparest with thy hand to bless
The royal son of France, when the fair hope
Of a new, glorious stem of sovereigns
Begins again to blossom in this land?
Why hasten then her death? She's dead already.
Contempt and scorn are death to her; take heed
Lest ill-tim'd pity call her into life.
'Tis therefore my advice to leave the sentence,
By which her life is forfeit, in full force.
Let her live on; but let her live beneath
The headsman's axe, and, from the very hour
One arm is lifted for her, let it fall.

ELIZABETH (*rises*).

My Lords, I now have heard your several thoughts,
And give my ardent thanks for this your zeal.
With God's assistance, who the hearts of kings
Illumines, I will weigh your arguments,
And choose what best my judgment shall approve.
[*To* BURLEIGH.
[Lord Burleigh's honest fears, I know it well,
Are but the offspring of his faithful care;
But yet, Lord Leicester has most truly said,
There is no need of haste; our enemy
Hath lost already her most dangerous sting—
The mighty arm of France: the fear that she
Might quickly be the victim of their zeal
Will curb the blind impatience of her friends.]

SCENE IV.

Enter SIR AMIAS PAULET *and* MORTIMER.

ELIZ. There's Sir Amias Paulet; noble Sir,
What tidings bring you?

PAUL. Gracious Sovereign,
My nephew, who but lately is return'd
From foreign travel, kneels before thy feet,
And offers thee his first and earliest homage.
Grant him thy royal grace, and let him grow
And flourish in the sunshine of thy favor.

MORTIMER (*kneeling on one knee*).
Long live my royal mistress! Happiness
And glory form a crown to grace her brows!

ELIZ. Arise, Sir Knight, and welcome here in England;
You've made, I hear, the tour, have been in France
And Rome, and tarried, too, some time at Rheims;
Tell me what plots our enemies are hatching?

MORT. May God confound them all! And may the darts
Which they shall aim against my Sovereign,
Recoiling, strike their own perfidious breasts!

ELIZ. Did you see Morgan, and the wily Bishop
Of Ross?

MORT. I saw, my Queen, all Scottish exiles
Who forge at Rheims their plots against this realm.
I stole into their confidence, in hopes
To learn some hint of their conspiracies.

PAUL. Private despatches they entrusted to him,
In cyphers, for the Queen of Scots, which he,
With loyal hand, hath given up to us.

ELIZ. Say, what are then their latest plans of treason?

MORT. It struck them all as 'twere a thunderbolt,
That France should leave them, and with England close

This firm alliance: now they turn their hopes
Tow'rds Spain——

ELIZABETH. This Walsingham hath written us.
Besides, a bull, which from the Vatican
Pope Sixtus lately levell'd at thy throne,
Arriv'd at Rheims as I was leaving it:
With the next ship we may expect it here.

LEIC. England no more is frighten'd by such arms.

BUR. They're always dangerous in bigots' hands.

ELIZABETH (*looking steadfastly at* MORTIMER).
Your enemies have said that you frequented
The schools at Rheims, and have abjur'd your faith.

MORT. So I pretended, that I must confess:
Such was my anxious wish to serve my Queen.

ELIZABETH (*to* PAULET, *who presents papers to her*).
What have you there?

PAULET. 'Tis from the Queen of Scots.
'Tis a petition, and to thee address'd.

BURLEIGH (*hastily catching at it.*)
Give me the paper.

PAULET (*giving it to the* QUEEN).
By your leave, my Lord
High Treasurer; the Lady order'd me
To bring it to her Majesty's own hands.
She says I am her enemy; I am
The enemy of her offences only,
And that which is consistent with my duty
I will, and readily, oblige her in.

[*The* QUEEN *takes the letter; as she reads it,* MORTIMER *and* LEICESTER *speak some words in private.*

BURLEIGH (*to* PAULET).

What may the purport of the letter be?
Idle complaints, from which one ought to screen
The Queen's too tender heart.

PAULET. What it contains
She did not hide from me; she asks a boon;
She begs to be admitted to the grace
Of speaking with the Queen.

BURLEIGH. It cannot be.

TAL. Why not? Her supplication's not unjust.

BUR. For her, the base encourager of murder;
Her, who hath thirsted for our sov'reign's blood,
The privilege to see the royal presence
Is forfeited: a faithful counsellor
Can never give this treacherous advice.

TAL. And if the Queen is gracious, Sir, are you
The man to hinder pity's soft emotions?

BUR. She is condemn'd to death: her head is laid
Beneath the axe, and it would ill become
The Queen to see a death-devoted head.
The sentence cannot have its execution
If the Queen's Majesty approaches her,
For pardon still attends the royal presence,
As sickness flies the health-dispensing hand.

ELIZABETH (*having read the letter, dries her tears*).
O! what is man! What is the bliss of earth!
To what extremities is she reduc'd
Who with such proud and splendid hopes began!
Who, call'd to sit on the most ancient throne
Of Christendom, misled by vain ambition,
Hop'd with a triple crown to deck her brows!
How is her language alter'd, since the time
When she assum'd the arms of England's crown,
And by the flatt'rers of her Court was styled

Sole monarch of the two Britannic isles!
Forgive me, Lords, my heart is cleft in twain,
Anguish possesses me, and my soul bleeds
To think that earthly goods are so unstable,
And that the dreadful fate which rules mankind
Should threaten mine own house, and scowl so near me.

TAL. O, Queen! the God of mercy hath inform'd
Your heart; O! hearken to this heav'nly guidance.
Most grievously, indeed, hath she aton'd
Her grievous crime, and it is time that now,
At last, her heavy penance have an end.
Stretch forth your hand, to raise this abject Queen,
And, like the luminous vision of an angel,
Descend into her gaol's sepulchral night.

BUR. Be steadfast, mighty Queen; let no emotion
Of seeming laudable humanity
Mislead thee; take not from thyself the pow'r
Of acting as necessity commands.
Thou *canst* not pardon her, thou *canst* not save her:
Then heap not on thyself the odious blame
That thou, with cruel and contemptuous triumph,
Didst glut thyself with gazing on thy victim.

LEIC. Let us, my Lords, remain within our bounds;
The Queen is wise, and doth not need our counsels
To lead her to the most becoming choice.
This meeting of the Queens hath nought in common
With the proceedings of the Court of Justice.
The law of England, not the monarch's will,
Condemns the Queen of Scotland, and 'twere worthy
Of the great soul of Queen Elizabeth,
To follow the soft dictates of her heart,

Though justice swerve not from its rigid path.

ELIZ. Retire, my Lords.—We shall, perhaps, find means
To reconcile the tender claims of pity
With what necessity imposes on us.
And now retire.—

[*The Lords retire: she calls* SIR EDWARD MORTIMER *back.*

Sir Edward Mortimer!

SCENE V.

ELIZABETH, MORTIMER.

ELIZABETH (*having measured him for some time, with her eyes, in silence*).

You've shown a spirit of advent'rous courage
And self-possession far beyond your years.
He who has timely learnt to play so well
The difficult dissembler's needful task
Becomes a perfect man before his time,
And shortens his probationary years.
Fate calls you to a lofty scene of action;
I prophesy it, and can, happily
For you, fulfil, myself, my own prediction.

MORT. Illustrious mistress, what I am, and all
I can accomplish, is devoted to you.

ELIZ. You've made acquaintance with the foes of England.
Their hate against me is implacable;
Their fell designs are inexhaustible.
As yet, indeed, Almighty Providence
Hath shielded me; but on my brows the crown
For ever trembles while *she* lives who fans
Their bigot-zeal, and animates their hopes.

MORT. She lives no more, as soon as you command it.
ELIZ. O, Sir! I thought I saw my labor's end,
And I am come no farther than at first.
I wish'd to let the laws of England act,
And keep my own hands pure from blood's defilement.
The sentence is pronounc'd—what gain I by it?
It must be executed, Mortimer,
And I must authorize the execution.
The blame will ever light on me, I must
Avow it, nor can save appearances.
That is the worst—
MORTIMER. But can appearances
Disturb your conscience where the cause is just?
ELIZ. You are unpractis'd in the world, Sir Knight;
What we appear, is subject to the judgment
Of all mankind, and what we are, of no man.
No one will be convinc'd that I am right:
I must take care that my connivance in
Her death be wrapp'd in everlasting doubt.
In deeds of such uncertain double visage
Safety lies only in obscurity.
Those measures are the worst that stand avow'd,
What's not abandon'd, is not wholly lost.
MORTIMER (*seeking to learn her meaning*).
Then it perhaps were best—
ELIZABETH (*quick*). Ay, surely 'twere
The best; O, Sir, my better angel speaks
Through you!—go on then, worthy Sir, conclude;
You are in earnest, you examine deep,
Have quite a different spirit from your uncle.
MORTIMER (*surprised*).
Have you imparted then your wishes to him?

ELIZ. I am sorry that I have.
MORTIMER. Excuse his age,
The old man is grown scrupulous; such bold
Adventures ask the enterprising heart
Of youth—
ELIZABETH. And may I venture then on *you*—
MORT. My hand I'll lend thee; save then as thou canst
Thy reputation—
ELIZABETH. Yes, Sir; if you could
But waken me some morning with this news—
"Maria Stuart, your blood-thirsty foe,
Breath'd yesternight her last"—
MORTIMER. Depend on me.
ELIZ. When shall my head lie calmly down to sleep?
MORT. The next new moon will terminate thy fears.
ELIZ. And be the selfsame happy day the dawn
Of your preferment—so God speed you, Sir;
And be not hurt, if, chance, my thankfulness
Should wear the mask of darkness.—Silence is
The happy suitor's god.—The closest bonds,
The dearest, are the work of secrecy. [*Exit.*

SCENE VI.

MORTIMER (*alone*).

Go, false, deceitful Queen! As thou deludest
The world, e'n so I cozen thee; 'tis right,
Thus to betray thee; 'tis a worthy deed.
Look I then like a murd'rer? Hast thou read
Upon my brow such base dexterity?
Trust only to *my* arm, and keep thine own
Conceal'd—assume the pious outward show
Of mercy 'fore the world, while reckoning
In secret on my murd'rous aid; and thus

By gaining time we shall ensure her rescue.
Thou wilt exalt me!—show'st me from afar
The costly recompense: but even were
Thyself the prize, and all thy woman's favor,
What art thou, poor one, and what canst thou proffer?
I scorn ambition's avaricious strife,
With *her* alone is all the charm of life,
O'er *her*, in rounds of endless glory, hover
Spirits with grace, and youth eternal bless'd,
Celestial joy is thron'd upon her breast.
Thou hast but earthly, mortal goods to offer—
That sov'reign good, for which all else be slighted,
When heart in heart, delighting and delighted,
Together flow in sweet forgetfulness;—
Ne'er didst thou woman's fairest crown possess,
Ne'er hast thou with thy hand a lover's heart requited.
—I must attend Lord Leicester, and deliver
Her letter to him—'tis a hateful charge—
I have no confidence in this court puppet—
I can effect her rescue, *I* alone;
Be danger, honor, and the prize my own.

[*As he is going,* PAULET *meets him.*

SCENE VII.

MORTIMER, PAULET.

PAUL. What said the Queen to you?—
MORTIMER. 'Twas nothing, Sir;
Nothing of consequence—
PAULET (*looking at him earnestly*). Hear, Mortimer!
It is a false and slipp'ry ground on which

You tread. The grace of princes is alluring,
Youth loves ambition—let not yours betray you.

MORT. Was it not yourself that brought me to the Court?

PAUL. O, would to God I had not done as much!
The honor of *our* house was never reap'd
In courts. Stand fast, my nephew—purchase not
Too dear, nor stain your conscience with a crime.

MORT. What are these fears? What are you dreaming of?

PAUL. How high soe'er the Queen may pledge herself
To raise you, trust not her alluring words.
[The spirit of the world's a lying spirit,
And vice is a deceitful, treach'rous friend.]
She will deny you, if you listen to her;
And, to preserve her own good name, will punish
The bloody deed, which she herself enjoin'd.

MORT. The bloody deed!—

PAULET. Away, dissimulation!—
I know the deed the Queen propos'd to you.
She hopes that your ambitious youth will prove
More docile than my rigid age. But say,
Have you then pledg'd your promise, have you?—

MORT. Uncle!

PAUL. If you have done so, I abandon you,
And lay my curse upon you—

LEICESTER (*entering*). Worthy Sir!
I with your nephew wish a word.—The Queen
Is graciously inclin'd to him; she wills
That to his custody the Scottish Queen
Be with full powers entrusted. She relies
On his fidelity.

PAULET. Relies!—'tis well—

LEIC. What say you, Sir?

PAULET. Her Majesty relies

On him; and I, my noble Lord, rely
Upon myself and my two open eyes. [*Exit.*

SCENE VIII.

LEICESTER, MORTIMER.

LEICESTER (*surprised*). What ailed the Knight?
MORTIMER. My Lord, I cannot tell
What angers him:—the confidence, perhaps,
The Queen so suddenly confers on me.
LEIC. Are you deserving, then, of confidence?
MORT. This would I ask of you, my Lord of Leicester.
LEIC. You said you wish'd to speak with me in private.
MORT. Assure me first that I may safely venture.
LEIC. Who gives me an assurance on your side?
Let not my want of confidence offend you;
I see you, Sir, exhibit at this court
Two diff'rent aspects; one of them *must* be
A borrow'd one; but which of them is real?
MORT. The selfsame doubts I have concerning you.
LEIC. Which, then, shall pave the way to confidence?
MORT. He who, by doing it, is least in danger.
LEIC. Well, that are you—
MORTIMER. No, you;—the evidence
Of such a weighty, powerful peer as you
Can overwhelm my voice. My accusation
Is weak against your rank and influence.
LIEC. Sir, you mistake. In ev'rything but this
I'm powerful here; but in this tender point,
Which I am call'd upon to trust you with,
I'm the weakest man of all the Court,
The poorest testimony can undo me.
MORT. If the all-pow'rful Earl of Leicester deign
To stoop so low to meet me, and to make

Such a confession to me, I may venture
To think a little better of myself,
And lead the way in magnanimity.

LEIC. Lead you the way of confidence, I'll follow.

MORTIMER (*producing suddenly the letter*).
Here is a letter from the Queen of Scotland.

LEICESTER (*alarmed, catches hastily at the letter*).
Speak softly, Sir!—what see I?—Oh it is
Her picture!—
[*Kisses and examines it with speechless joy—a pause.*

MORTIMER (*who has watched him closely the whole time*).
Now, my Lord, I can believe you.

LEICESTER (*having hastily run through the letter*).
You know the purport of this letter, Sir?

MORT. Not I.—

LEICESTER. Indeed? She surely hath inform'd you.—

MORT. Nothing hath she inform'd me of. She said
You would explain this riddle to me—'tis
To me a riddle that the Earl of Leicester,
The far-fam'd fav'rite of Elizabeth,
The open, bitter enemy of Mary,
And one of those who spoke her mortal sentence,
Should be the man from whom the Queen expects
Deliv'rance from her woes; and yet it must be;
Your eyes express too plainly what your heart
Feels for the hapless lady.—

LEICESTER. Tell me, Sir,
First, how it comes that you should take so warm
An int'rest in her fate; and what it was
Gain'd you her confidence?—

MORTIMER. My Lord, I can,
And in a few words, explain this mystery.

I lately have at Rome abjur'd my creed,
And stand in correspondence with the Guises.
A letter from the Cardinal Archbishop
Was my credential with the Queen of Scots.

LEIC. I am acquainted, Sir, with your conversion:
'Twas that which wak'd my confidence towards you.
[Each remnant of distrust be henceforth banish'd;]
Your hand, Sir; pardon me these idle doubts.
I cannot use too much precaution here,
Knowing how Walsingham and Burleigh hate me,
And, watching me, in secret spread their snares;
You might have been their instrument, their creature,
To lure me to their toils.

MORTIMER. How poor a part
So great a nobleman is forc'd to play
At court! My Lord, I pity you.

LEICESTER. With joy
I rest upon the faithful breast of friendship,
Where I can ease me of this long constraint.
You seem surpris'd, Sir, that my heart is turn'd
So suddenly towards the captive Queen.
In truth, I never hated her;—the times
Have forc'd me to appear her enemy.
She was, as you well know, my destined bride,
Long since, ere she bestowed her hand on Darnley,
While yet the beams of glory round her smil'd.
Coldly I *then* refused the proffered boon.
Now in confinement, at the gates of death,
I claim her, at the hazard of my life.

MORT. True magnanimity, my Lord—

LEICESTER. The state
Of circumstances since that time is chang'd.

Ambition made me all insensible
To youth and beauty.—Mary's hand I held
Too insignificant for me;—I hoped
To be the husband of the Queen of England.

MORT. It is well known she gave you preference
Before all others.

LEICESTER. So, indeed, it seem'd.
Now, after ten lost years of tedious courtship
And hateful self-constraint—O, Sir, my heart
Must ease itself of this long agony.
They call me happy!—Did they only know
What the chains are for which they envy me!
When I had sacrificed ten bitter years
To the proud idol of her vanity;
Submitted with a slave's humility
To ev'ry change of her despotic fancies;
The plaything of each little wayward whim.
At times by seeming tenderness caressed,
As oft repulsed with proud and cold disdain;
Alike tormented by her grace and rigor:
Watch'd like a pris'ner by the Argus-eyes
Of jealousy; examin'd like a school-boy,
And rail'd at like a servant.—O, no tongue
Can paint this hell—

MORTIMER. My Lord, I feel for you.

LEIC. To lose, and at the very goal, the prize!
Another comes to rob me of the fruits
Of my so anxious wooing. I must lose
To her young blooming husband all those rights
Of which I was so long in full possession;
And I must from the stage descend, where I
So long have play'd the most distinguish'd part.
'Tis not her hand alone this envious stranger

Threatens—he'd rob me of her favor too ;
She is a woman, and he form'd to please.

MORT. He is the son of Cath'rine. He has learnt
In a good school the arts of flattery.

LEIC. Thus fall my hopes ;—I strove to seize a plank
To bear me in this shipwreck of my fortunes,
And my eye turn'd itself towards the hope
Of former days once more ; then Mary's image
Within me was renew'd, and youth and beauty
Once more asserted all their former rights.
No more 'twas cold ambition ; 'twas my heart
Which now compar'd, and with regret I felt
The value of the jewel I had lost.
With horror I beheld her in the depths
Of misery, cast down by my transgression ;
Then wak'd the hope in me that I might still
Deliver and possess her ; I contriv'd
To send her, through a faithful hand, the news
Of my conversion to her interests ;
And in this letter which you brought me she
Assures me that she pardons me, and offers
Herself as guerdon if I rescue her.

MORT. But you attempted nothing for her rescue.
You let her be condemn'd without a word ;
You gave, yourself, your verdict for her death ;
A miracle must happen, and the light
Of truth must move me, *me*, her keeper's nephew ;
And Heav'n must, in the Vatican at Rome,
Prepare for her an unexpected succor,
Else had she never found the way to you.

LEIC. O, Sir ! It has tormented me enough !
About this time it was that they remov'd her
From Talbot's castle, and deliver'd her

Up to your uncle's stricter custody.
Each way to her was shut. I was oblig'd,
Before the world, to persecute her still;
But do not think that I would patiently
Have seen her led to death. No, Sir; I hop'd,
And still I hope, to ward off all extremes,
Till I can find some certain means to save her.

MORT. These are already found: my Lord of Leicester,
Your gen'rous confidence in me deserves
A like return. *I* will deliver her.
That is my object here—my dispositions
Are made already, and your pow'rful aid
Assures us of success in our attempt.

LEIC. What say you?—you alarm me—how?—you would——

MORT. I'll open forcibly her prison-gates:—
I have confederates, and all is ready.

LEIC. You have confederates, accomplices?
Alas! In what rash enterprise would you
Engage me? And these friends, know they *my* secret?

MORT. Fear not; our plan was laid without your help,
Without your help it would have been accomplish'd,
Had she not signified her resolution
To owe her liberty to you alone.

LEIC. And can you then, with certainty, assure me
That in your plot my name has not been mention'd?

MORT. You may depend upon it. How, my Lord,
So scrupulous when help is offer'd you?
You wish to rescue Mary and possess her;
You find confed'rates; sudden, unexpected,
The readiest means fall, as it were from Heaven;

Yet you show more perplexity than joy.

LEIC. We must avoid all violence; it is
Too dangerous an enterprise.

MORTIMER. Delay
Is also dangerous.

LEICESTER. I tell you, Sir,
'Tis not to be attempted—

MORTIMER. My Lord,
Too hazardous for *you* who would possess her;
But *we*, who only wish to rescue her,
We are more bold.

LEICESTER. Young man, you are too hasty
In such a thorny, dangerous attempt.

MORT. And you too scrupulous in honor's cause.

LEIC. I see the trammels that are spread around us.

MORT. And I feel courage to break through them all.

LEIC. Foolhardiness and madness, is this courage?

MORT. This prudence is not bravery, my Lord.

LEIC. You surely wish to end like Babington.

MORT. You not to imitate great Norfolk's virtue.

LEIC. Norfolk ne'er won the bride he woo'd so fondly.

MORT. But yet he prov'd how truly he deserved her.

LEIC. If *we* are ruined, she must fall with us.

MORT. If *we* risk nothing, she will ne'er be rescued.

LEIC. You will not weigh the matter, will not hear;
With blind and hasty rashness you destroy
The plans which I so happily had framed.

MORT. And what were, then, the plans which *you* had fram'd?
What have *you* done, then, to deliver her?
And how, if I were miscreant enough
To murder her, as was propos'd to me
This moment by Elizabeth, and which

She looks upon as certain; only name
The measures *you* have taken to protect her?

LEIC. Did the Queen give you then this bloody order?

MORT. She was deceived in me, as Mary is
In you.

LEICESTER. And have you promis'd it; say, have you?

MORT. That she might not engage another's hand,
I offer'd mine.

LEICESTER. Well done, Sir,—that was right;—
This gives us leisure, for she rests secure
Upon your bloody service, and the sentence
Is unfulfill'd the while, and we gain time.

MORTIMER (*angrily*).
No, we are losing time.

LEICESTER. The Queen depends
On you, and will the readier make a show
Of mercy—and I may prevail on her
To give an audience to her adversary;
And by this stratagem we tie her hands:
Yes! I will make the attempt, strain ev'ry nerve.

MORT. And what is gain'd by this? When she discovers
That I am cheating her, that Mary lives,
Are we not where we were? She never will
Be free; the mildest doom which can await her
At best is but perpetual confinement.
A daring deed must one day end the matter:
Why will you not with such a deed begin?
The pow'r is in your hands, would you but rouse
The might of your dependents round about
Your many castles, 'twere an host; and still
Has Mary many secret friends. The Howards
And Percies' noble houses, though their chiefs
Be fall'n, are rich in heroes; they but wait

For the example of some potent lord.
Away with feigning—act an open part,
And, like a loyal knight, protect your fair;
Fight a good fight for her! You know you are
Lord of the person of the Queen of England,
Whene'er you will: invite her to your castle,
Oft hath she thither follow'd you—then show
That you're a man—then speak as master—keep her
Confin'd till she release the Queen of Scots.

LEIC. I am astonish'd—I am terrified!—
Where would your giddy madness hurry you?
Are you acquainted with this country? Know you
The deeps and shallows of this court? With what
A potent spell this female sceptre binds
And rules men's spirits round her? 'Tis in vain
You seek th' heroic energy which once
Was active in this land!—it is subdued,—
A woman holds it under lock and key,
And ev'ry spring of courage is relax'd.
Follow my counsel—venture nothing rashly.
Some one approaches—go—

MORTIMER. And Mary hopes—
Shall I return to her with empty comfort?

LEIC. Bear her my vows of everlasting love.

MORT. Bear them yourself! I offer'd my assistance
As her deliv'rer, not your messenger. [*Exit.*

SCENE IX.

ELIZABETH, LEICESTER.

ELIZ. Say who was here? I heard the sound of voices.

LEICESTER (*turning quickly and perplexed round, on hearing the* QUEEN).
It was young Mortimer—

ELIZABETH. How now, my Lord:
Why so confus'd?
LEICESTER (*collecting himself*).
Your presence is the cause.
Ne'er did I see thy beauty so resplendent;
My sight is dazzled by thy heavenly charms.
Oh!—
ELIZABETH. Whence this sigh?
LEICESTER. Have I no reason, then,
To sigh? When I behold you in your glory,
I feel anew, with pain unspeakable,
The loss which threatens me.
ELIZABETH. What loss, my Lord?
LEIC. Your heart—your own inestimable self:—
Soon will you feel yourself within the arms
Of your young, ardent husband, highly bless'd;
He will possess your heart, without a rival.
He is of royal blood—that am not *I*.
Yet, spite of all the world can say, there lives not
One on this globe who with such fervent zeal
Adores you as the man who loses you.
Anjou hath never seen you, can but love
Your glory, and the splendor of your reign;—
But I love *you*—and were you born of all
The peasant maids the poorest, I the first
Of kings, I would descend to your condition,
And lay my crown and sceptre at your feet!
ELIZ. Oh pity me, my Dudley; do not blame me—
I cannot ask my heart. Oh, *that* had chosen
Far otherwise! Ah, how I envy others
Who can exalt the object of their love!
But I am not so blest:—'tis not my fortune
To place upon the brows of him, the dearest

Of men to me, the royal crown of England.
The Queen of Scotland was allow'd to make
Her hand the token of her inclination;—
She hath had ev'ry freedom, and hath drunk,
E'en to the very dregs, the cup of joy.

LEIC. And now she drinks the bitter cup of sorrow.

ELIZ. She never did respect the world's opinion;—
Life was to her a sport;—she never courted
The yoke to which I bow'd my willing neck.
And yet, methinks, I had as just a claim
As she to please myself and taste the joys
Of life:—but I preferr'd the rigid duties
Which royalty imposed on me;—yet *she*,
She was the favorite of all the men,
Because she only strove to be a woman,
And youth and age became alike her suitors.
Thus are the men—voluptuaries all!
The willing slaves of levity and pleasure;
Value that least which claims their reverence.
And did not even Talbot, though grey-headed,
Grow young again, when speaking of her charms?

LEIC. Forgive him—for he was her keeper once,
And she has fool'd him with her cunning wiles.

ELIZ. And is it really true, that she's so fair?
So often have I been oblig'd to hear
The praises of this wonder—it were well
If I could learn on what I might depend:
Pictures are flattering, and description lies;—
I will trust nothing but my own conviction.
Why gaze you at me thus?

LEICESTER. I plac'd in thought
You and Maria Stuart side by side.
Yes! I confess, I oft have felt a wish,

If it could be but secretly contriv'd,
To see you placed beside the Scottish Queen.
Then would you feel, and not till then, the full
Enjoyment of your triumph :—she deserves
To be thus humbled ; she deserves to see,
With her own eyes, and envy's glance is keen,
Herself surpass'd, to feel herself o'ermatch'd,
As much by thee in form and princely grace
As in each virtue that adorns the sex.

ELIZ. In years she has th' advantage—

LEICESTER. Has she so?
I never should have thought it. But her griefs,
Her sufferings, indeed ! 'tis possible,
Have brought down age upon her ere her time.
Yes, and 'twould mortify her more to see thee
As bride—*she* hath already turn'd her back
On each fair hope of life, and she would see thee
Advancing tow'rds the open arms of joy—
See thee as bride of France's royal son,
She who hath always plumed herself so high
On her connection with the House of France,
And still depends upon its mighty aid.

ELIZABETH (*with a careless air*).
I'm teaz'd to grant this interview.

LEICESTER. She asks it
As a favor ; grant it as a punishment.
For though you should conduct her to the block,
Yet would it less torment her, than to see
Herself extinguish'd by your beauty's splendor.
Thus can you murder her, as she hath wish'd
To murder you. When she beholds your beauty,
Guarded by modesty, and beaming bright,
In the clear glory of unspotted fame,

(Which *she* with thoughtless levity discarded,)
Exalted by the splendor of the crown,
And blooming now with tender bridal graces—
Then is the hour of her destruction come.
Yes—when I now behold you—you were never,
No, never were you so prepar'd to seal
The triumph of your beauty. As but now
You enter'd the apartment, I was dazzled
As by a glorious vision from on high.
Could you but now, now as you are, appear
Before her, you could find no better moment.

ELIZ. Now?—no—not now—no, Leicester—this must be
Maturely weigh'd—I must with Burleigh—

LEICESTER. Burleigh
To him you are but Sov'reign, and as such
Alone he seeks your welfare; but your rights,
Deriv'd from womanhood, this tender point
Must be decided by your own tribunal,
Not by the statesman:—yet e'en policy
Demands that you should see her, and allure,
By such a gen'rous deed, the public voice.
You can hereafter act as it may please you,
To rid you of the hateful enemy.

ELIZ. But would it then become me to behold
My kinswoman in infamy and want?
They say she is not royally attended;
Would not the sight of her distress reproach me?

LEIC. You need not cross her threshold—hear my counsel:—
A fortunate conjuncture favors it.
The hunt you mean to honor with your presence
Is in the neighborhood of Fotheringay;
Permission may be given to Lady Stuart

To take the air; you meet her in the park,
As if by accident; it must not seem
To have been plann'd, and should you not incline.
You need not speak to her.

ELIZABETH. If I am foolish,
Be yours the fault, not mine. I would not care
To-day to cross your wishes; for to-day
I've griev'd you more than all my other subjects.
[*Tenderly.*
Let it then be your fancy. Leicester, hence
You see the free obsequiousness of love,
Which suffers that which it cannot approve.

[LEICESTER *prostrates himself before her, and the curtain falls.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.

In a Park.—In the foreground Trees; in the background a distant Prospect.

MARY *advances, running from behind the Trees.* HANNAH KENNEDY *follows slowly.*

KEN. You hasten on as if endow'd with wings—
I cannot follow you so swiftly—wait.

MARY. Freedom returns! O let me enjoy it,—
Let me be childish,—be thou childish with me
Freedom invites me! O let me employ it,
Skimming with winged step light o'er the lea;
Have I escaped from this mansion of mourning?
Holds me no more the sad dungeon of care?
Let me, with joy and with eagerness burning,
Drink in the free, the celestial air!

KEN. O, my dear Lady! but a very little
Is your sad gaol extended; you behold not
The wall that shuts us in; these plaited tufts
Of trees hide from your sight the hated object.

MARY. Thanks to these friendly trees, that hide from me
My prison walls, and flatter my illusion!
Happy I now may dream myself, and free;
Why wake me from my dream's so sweet confusion?
The extended vault of heaven around me lies,
Free and unfetter'd range my wandering eyes
O'er space's vast, immeasurable sea!
From where yon misty mountains rise on high
I can my empire's boundaries explore;
And those light clouds which, steering southwards, fly,
Seek the mild clime of France's genial shore.
Fast fleeting clouds! ye meteors that fly;
Could I but with you sail through the sky!
Tenderly greet the dear land of my youth!
Here I am captive! oppress'd by my foes,
No other than you may carry my woes,
Free thro' the ether your pathway is seen,
Ye own not the power of this tyrant Queen.

KEN. Alas! dear Lady! You're beside yourself,
This long-lost, long-sought freedom makes you rave.

MARY. Yonder's a fisher returning to home;—
Poor though it be, would he lend me his wherry,
Quick to congenial shores would I ferry.
Spare is his trade, and labor's his doom—
Rich would I freight his vessel with treasure,
Such a draught should be his as he never had seen,
Wealth should he find in his nets without measure,
Would he but rescue a poor captive Queen.

KEN. Fond, fruitless wishes! See you not from far,
How we are follow'd by observing spies?—
A dismal, barb'rous prohibition scares
Each sympathetic being from our path.

MARY. No, gentle Hannah! Trust me, not in vain
My prison gates are open'd. This small grace
Is harbinger of greater happiness.
No! I mistake not—'tis the active hand
Of love to which I owe this kind indulgence;
I recognize in this the mighty arm
Of Leicester. They will by degrees expand
My prison; will accustom me, through small,
To greater liberty, until at last
I shall behold the face of him whose hand
Will dash my fetters off, and that for ever.

KEN. O, my dear Queen! I cannot reconcile
These contradictions. 'Twas but yesterday
That they announc'd your death, and all at once,
To-day, you have such liberty. Their chains
Are also loos'd, as I have oft been told,
Whom everlasting liberty awaits.

[*Hunting-horns at a distance.*

MARY. Hear'st thou the bugle, so blithely resounding?
Hear'st thou its echoes through wood and through plain?
Oh, might I now, on my nimble steed bounding,
Join with the jocund, the frolicsome train!

[*Hunting-horns again heard.*

Again! O this sad and this pleasing remembrance!
These are the sounds, which, so sprightly and clear,
Oft, when with music the hounds and the horn,
So cheerfully welcom'd the break of the morn,
On the heaths of the Highlands delighted my ear.

SCENE II.

Enter PAULET.

PAUL. Well! have I acted right at last, my Lady?
Do I for once, at least, deserve your thanks?
MARY. How! Do I owe this favor, Sir, to you?
PAUL. Why not to me? I visited the Court,
And gave the Queen your letter.
MARY. Did you give it?
In very truth did you deliver it?
And is this freedom which I now enjoy
The happy consequence?
PAULET (*significantly*). Nor that alone;
Prepare yourself to see a greater still.
MARY. A greater still! What do you mean by that?
PAUL. You heard the bugle-horns?
MARY (*starting back with foreboding apprehension*).
You frighten me—
PAUL. The Queen is hunting in the neighborhood—
MARY. What!
PAUL. In a few moments she'll appear before you.
KENNEDY (*hastening towards* MARY, *and about to fall*).
How fare you, dearest Lady?—you grow pale.
PAUL. How? Is't not well? Was it not then your pray'r?
'Tis granted now, before it was expected;
You who had ever such a ready speech,
Now summon all your powers of eloquence,
The important time to use them now is come.
MARY. O, why was I not told of this before?
Now I am not prepar'd for it—not now—
What, as the greatest favor, I besought,
Seems to me now most fearful:—Hannah, come,
Lead me into the house, till I collect
My spirits.

PAULET. Stay; you must await her here.
Yes!—I believe you may be well alarm'd
To stand before your judge.

SCENE III.

Enter the EARL OF SHREWSBURY.

MARY. 'Tis not for that,
O God! Far other thoughts possess me now.
O, worthy Shrewsbury! You come as though
You were an angel sent to me from heav'n.
I cannot, will not see her. Save me, save me
From the detested sight!

SHREWSBURY. Your Majesty,
Command yourself, and summon all your courage;
'Tis the decisive moment of your fate.

MARY. For years I've waited, and prepared myself.
For this I've studied, weigh'd and written down
Each word within the tablet of my mem'ry,
That was to touch and move her to compassion.
Forgotten suddenly, effac'd is all,
And nothing lives within me at this moment
But the fierce, burning feeling of my wrongs.
My heart is turn'd to direst hate against her;
All gentle thoughts, all sweet, forgiving words
Are gone, and round me stand, with grisly mien,
The fiends of hell, and shake their snaky locks!

SHREW. Command your wild, rebellious blood;—constrain
The bitterness which fills your heart. No good
Ensues, when hatred is oppos'd to hate.
How much soe'er the inward struggle cost,
You must submit to stern necessity.
The pow'r is in her hand, be therefore humble.

MARY. To her? I never can.

SHREWSBURY. But pray, submit.
Speak with respect, with calmness! Strive to move
Her magnanimity; insist not, now,
Upon your rights, not now—'tis not the season.

MARY. Ah! woe is me! I've pray'd for my destruction,
And, as a curse to me, my prayer is heard.
We never should have seen each other—never!—
O, this can never, never come to good.
Rather in love could fire and water meet,
The timid lamb embrace the roaring tiger!—
I have been hurt too grievously; she hath
Too grievously oppress'd me;—no atonement
Can make us friends!

SHREWSBURY. First see her, face to face:
Did I not see how she was mov'd at reading
Your letter? How her eyes were drown'd in tears?
No—she is not unfeeling; only place
More confidence in her. It was for this
That I came on before her, to entreat you
To be collected—to admonish you—

MARY (*seizing his hand*).
Oh, Talbot! you have ever been my friend.
Had I but stay'd beneath your kindly care!
They have, indeed, misused me, Shrewsbury.

SHREW. Let all be now forgot, and only think
How to receive her with submissiveness.

MARY. Is Burleigh with her, too, my evil genius?

SHREW. No one attends her but the Earl of Leicester.

MARY. Lord Leicester?

SHREWSBURY. Fear not him; it is not he
Who wishes your destruction;—'twas his work
That here the Queen hath granted you this meeting.

MARY. Ah! well I knew it.

SHREWSBURY. What?
PAULET. The Queen approaches.
[*They all draw aside;* MARY *alone remains, leaning on* KENNEDY.

SCENE IV.

The same, ELIZABETH, EARL OF LEICESTER, *and Retinue.*

ELIZABETH (*to* LEICESTER).
What seat is that, my Lord?
LEICESTER. 'Tis Fotheringay.
ELIZABETH (*to* SHREWSBURY).
My Lord, send back our retinue to London;
The people crowd too eager in the roads,
We'll seek a refuge in this quiet park.
[TALBOT *sends the train away. She looks steadfastly at* MARY, *as she speaks further with* PAULET.
My honest people love me overmuch.
These signs of joy are quite idolatrous.
Thus should a God be honor'd, not a mortal.
MARY (*who the whole time had leaned, almost fainting, on* KENNEDY, *rises now, and her eyes meet the steady piercing look of* ELIZABETH; *she shudders and throws herself again upon* KENNEDY'S *bosom*).
O God! from out these features speaks no heart.
ELIZ. What lady 's that?—
[*A general embarrassed silence.*
LEICESTER. You are at Fotheringay,
My Liege!
ELIZABETH (*as if surprised, casting an angry look at* LEICESTER).
Who hath done this, my Lord of Leicester?
LEIC. 'Tis past, my Queen;—and now that Heav'n hath led
Your foosteps hither, be magnanimous,

And let sweet pity be triumphant now.

SHREW. O royal mistress! yield to our entreaties;
O cast your eyes on this unhappy one,
Who stands dissolved in anguish.

[MARY *collects herself, and begins to advance towards* ELIZABETH, *stops shuddering at half way:—her action expresses the most violent internal struggle.*

ELIZABETH. How, my Lords!
Which of you then announc'd to me a prisoner
Bow'd down by woe? I see a haughty one,
By no means humbled by calamity.

MARY. Well, be it so:—to this will I submit.
Farewell high thought, and pride of noble mind!
I will forget my dignity, and all
My sufferings; I will fall before *her* feet,
Who hath reduced me to this wretchedness.

[*She turns towards the* QUEEN.

The voice of Heav'n decides for you, my sister.
Your happy brows are now with triumph crown'd,
I bless the Power Divine, which thus hath rais'd you.

[*She kneels.*

But in your turn be merciful, my sister;
Let me not lie before you thus disgraced;
Stretch forth your hand, your royal hand, to raise
Your sister from the depths of her distress.

ELIZABETH (*stepping back*).
You are where it becomes you, Lady Stuart;
And thankfully I prize my God's protection,
Who hath not suffer'd me to kneel a suppliant
Thus at your feet, as you now kneel at mine.

MARY (*with increasing energy of feeling*).
Think on all earthly things, vicissitudes.

Oh! there are gods who punish haughty pride;
Respect them, honor them, the dreadful ones
Who thus before thy feet have humbled me!
Before these strangers' eyes, dishonor not
Yourself in me: profane not, nor disgrace
The royal blood of Tudor. In my veins
It flows as pure a stream as in your own.
O! for God's pity, stand not so estranged
And inaccessible, like some tall cliff,
Which the poor shipwreck'd mariner in vain
Struggles to seize, and labors to embrace.
My all, my life, my fortune now depends
Upon the influence of my words and tears;
That I may touch your heart, O! set mine free.
If you regard me with those icy looks,
My shudd'ring heart contracts itself, the stream
Of tears is dried, and frigid horror chains
The words of supplication in my bosom!

ELIZABETH (*cold and severe*).

What would you say to me, my Lady Stuart?
You wish'd to speak with me; and I, forgetting
The Queen, and all the wrongs I have sustain'd,
Fulfil the pious duty of the sister,
And grant the boon you wished for of my presence.
Yet I, in yielding to the gen'rous feelings
Of magnanimity, expose myself
To rightful censure, that I stoop so low,
For well you know, you would have had me murder'd.

MARY. O! how shall I begin? O, how shall I
So artfully arrange my cautious words
That they may touch yet not offend your heart?—
Strengthen my words, O Heav'n! and take from
them

Whate'er might wound. Alas! I cannot speak
In my own cause without impeaching you,
And that most heavily; I wish not so;
You have not, as you ought, behav'd to me;
I am a Queen, like you, yet you have held me
Confin'd in prison. As a suppliant
I came to you, yet *you* in me insulted
The pious use of hospitality;
Slighting in me the holy law of nations,
Immur'd me in a dungeon—tore from me
My friends and servants; to unseemly want
I was exposed, and hurried to the bar
Of a disgraceful, insolent tribunal.
No more of this;—in everlasting silence
Be buried all the cruelties I suffered!
See—I will throw the blame of all on fate.
'Twas not your fault, no more than it was mine.
An evil spirit rose from the abyss,
To kindle in our hearts the flames of hate
By which our tender youth had been divided.
It grew with us, and bad, designing men
Fann'd with their ready breath the fatal fire:
Frantics, enthusiasts, with sword and dagger
Arm'd the uncall'd-for hand! This is the curse
Of kings, that they, divided, tear the world
In pieces with their hatred, and let loose
The raging furies of all hellish strife!
No foreign tongue is now between us, sister,
[*Approaching her confidently, and with a flattering tone.*
Now stand we face to face; now, sister, speak;
Name but my crime, I'll fully satisfy you,—
Alas! had you vouchsaf'd to hear me then,

When I so earnest sought to meet your eye,
It never would have come to this, nor would,
Here in this mournful place, have happen'd now
This so distressful, this so mournful meeting.

ELIZ. My better stars preserv'd me. I was warn'd,
And laid not to my breast the pois'nous adder!
Accuse not fate! your own deceitful heart
It was, the wild ambition of your house:
As yet no enmities had pass'd between us,
When your imperious uncle, the proud priest,
Whose shameless hand grasps at all crowns, attack'd me
With unprovok'd hostility, and taught
You, but too docile, to assume my arms,
To vest yourself with my imperial title,
And meet me in the lists in mortal strife:
What arms employ'd he not to storm my throne?
The curses of the priests, the people's sword,
The dreadful weapons of religious frenzy;—
Ev'n here in my own kingdom's peaceful haunts
He fann'd the flames of civil insurrection;—
But God is with me, and the haughty priest
Has not maintain'd the field. The blow was aim'd
Full at my head, but yours it is which falls!

MARY. I'm in the hand of Heav'n. You never will
Exert so cruelly the pow'r it gives you.

ELIZ. Who shall prevent me? Say, did not your uncle
Set all the kings of Europe the example
How to conclude a peace with those they hate?
Be mine the school of Saint Bartholomew;
What's kindred then to me, or nations' laws?
The Church can break the bands of ev'ry duty;
It consecrates the regicide, the traitor;

I only practise what your priests have taught!
Say then, what surety can be offer'd me,
Should I magnanimously loose your bonds?
Say, with what lock can I secure your faith,
Which by St. Peter's keys cannot be open'd?
Force is my only surety; no alliance
Can be concluded with a race of vipers.

MARY. O! this is but your wretched, dark suspicion!
For you have constantly regarded me
But as a stranger and an enemy.
Had you declar'd me heir to your dominions,
As is my right, then gratitude and love
In me had fix'd for you a faithful friend
And kinswoman.

ELIZABETH. Your friendship is abroad,
Your house is Papacy, the monk your brother.
Name *you* my successor! The treach'rous snare!
That in my life you might seduce my people;
And, like a sly Armida, in your net
Entangle all our noble English youth;
That all might turn to the new rising sun,
And I—

MARY. O, sister, rule your realm in peace
I give up ev'ry claim to these domains—
Alas! the pinions of my soul are lam'd;
Greatness entices me no more: your point
Is gain'd; I am but Mary's shadow now—
My noble spirit is at last broke down
By long captivity:—you've done your worst
On me; you have destroy'd me in my bloom!
Now end your work, my sister;—speak at length
The word, which to pronounce has brought you hither,

For I will ne'er believe that you are come
To mock unfeelingly your hapless victim.
Pronounce this word;—say, "Mary, you are free:
You have already felt my pow'r,—learn now
To honor, too, my generosity."
Say this, and I will take my life, will take
My freedom, as a present from your hands.
One word makes all undone;—I wait for it;—
O let it not be needlessly delay'd.
Woe to you if you end not with this word!
For should you not, like some divinity
Dispensing noble blessings, quit me now,
Then, sister, not for all this island's wealth,
For all the realms encircled by the deep,
Would I exchange my present lot for yours.

ELIZ. And you confess at last that you are conquer'd:
Are all your schemes run out? No more assassins
Now on the road? Will no adventurer
Attempt again for you the sad achievement?
Yes, madam, it is over:—You'll seduce
No mortal more. The world has other cares;—
None is ambitious of the dang'rous honor
Of being your fourth husband:—You destroy
Your wooers like your husbands.

MARY (*starting angrily*). Sister, sister!—
Grant me forbearance, all ye pow'rs of heav'n!

ELIZABETH (*regards her long, with a look of proud contempt*).
Those, then, my Lord of Leicester, are the charms
Which no man with impunity can view,
Near which no woman dare attempt to stand?
In sooth, this honor has been cheaply gain'd;
She who to all is common may with ease
Become the common object of applause.

MARY. This is too much!

ELIZABETH (*laughing insultingly*).

You show us now, indeed,
Your real face; till now 'twas but the mask.

MARY (*burning with rage, yet dignified and noble*).

My sins were human, and the faults of youth;
Superior force misled me. I have never
Denied or sought to hide it: I despis'd
All false appearance as became a Queen.
The worst of me is known, and I can say
That I am better than the fame I bear.
Woe to you! when, in time to come, the world
Shall draw the robe of honor from your deeds,
With which thy arch-hypocrisy has veil'd
The raging flames of lawless secret lust.
Virtue was not your portion from your mother;
Well know we what it was which brought the head
Of Anna Boleyn to the fatal block.

SHREWSBURY (*stepping between both* QUEENS).

O! Heav'n! Alas, and must it come to this!
Is this the moderation, the submission,
My Lady?—

MARY. Moderation! I've supported
What human nature can support: farewell,
Lamb-hearted resignation, passive patience,
Fly to thy native heaven; burst at length
Thy bonds, come forward from thy dreary cave
In all thy fury, long-suppressed rancor!
And thou, who to the anger'd basilisk
Impart'st the murd'rous glance, O, arm my tongue
With poison'd darts!

SHREWSBURY. She is beside herself!
Exasperated, mad! My Liege, forgive her.

[ELIZABETH, *speechless with anger, casts enraged looks at* MARY.

LEICESTER (*in the most violent agitation; he seeks to lead* ELIZABETH *away.*

Attend not to her rage! Away, away,
From this disastrous place!

MARY (*raising her voice*). A bastard soils,
Profanes the English throne! The gen'rous Britons
Are cheated by a juggler [whose whole figure
Is false and painted, heart as well as face!]
If right prevail'd, you now would in the dust
Before me lie, for I'm your rightful monarch!

[ELIZABETH *hastily quits the stage; the Lords follow her in the greatest consternation.*

SCENE V.

MARY, KENNEDY.

KEN. What have you done? She has gone hence in wrath.
All hope is over now!

MARY (*still quite beside herself*).
Gone hence in wrath!
She carries death within her heart! I know it!
[*Falling on* KENNEDY'S *bosom.*
Now I am happy, Hannah! and, at last,
After whole years of sorrow and abasement,
One moment of victorious revenge!
A weight falls off my heart, a weight of mountains;
I plung'd the steel in my oppressor's breast!

KEN. Unhappy Lady! Frenzy overcomes you.
Yes, you have wounded your invet'rate foe;
'Tis she who wields the light'ning, she is Queen;
You have insulted her before her minion.

MARY. I have abas'd her before Leicester's eyes;
He saw it, he was witness of my triumph.
How did I hurl her from her haughty height,
He saw it, and his presence strengthen'd me.

SCENE VI.

Enter MORTIMER.

KEN. O Sir! What an occurrence!

MORTIMER. I heard all—

[*Gives the nurse a sign to repair to her post, and draws nearer; his whole appearance expresses the utmost violence of passion.*

Thine is the palm;—thou trod'st her to the dust!—
Thou wast the Queen, she was the malefactor;—
I am transported with thy noble courage;—
Yes! I adore thee; like a Deity,
My sense is dazzled by thy heav'nly beams.

MARY (*with vivacity and expectation*).
You spoke with Leicester, gave my letter to him.—
My present, too?—O speak, Sir.

MORTIMER (*beholding her with glowing looks*).
How thy noble,
Thy royal indignation shone, and cast
A glory round thy beauty; yes, by Heavens,
Thou art the fairest woman upon earth!

MARY. Sir, satisfy, I beg you, my impatience;
What says his Lordship? Say, Sir, may I hope?

MORT. Who?—he?—he is a wretch, a very coward,
Hope nought from him; despise him, and forget him!

MARY. What say you?

MORTIMER. He deliver, and possess you!
Why let him dare it:—he!—he must with me

In mortal contest first deserve the prize!

MARY. You gave him not my letter? Then, indeed,
My hopes are lost!

MORTIMER. The coward loves his life.
Whoe'er would rescue you, and call you his,
Must boldly dare affront e'en death itself!

MARY. Will he do nothing for me?

MORTIMER. Speak not of him.
What can he do? What need have we of him?
I will release you; I alone.

MARY. Alas!
What pow'r have you?

MORTIMER. Deceive yourself no more;
Think not your case is now as formerly;
The moment that the Queen thus quitted you,
And that your interview had ta'en this turn,
All hope was lost, each way of mercy shut.
Now deeds must speak, now boldness must decide;
To compass all must all be hazarded;
You must be free before the morning break.

MARY. What say you, Sir—to-night?—impossible!

MORT. Hear what has been resolv'd:—I led my friends
Into a private chapel, where a priest
Heard our confession, and, for ev'ry sin
We had committed, gave us absolution;
He gave us absolution, too, beforehand,
For ev'ry crime we might commit in future;
He gave us, too, the final sacrament,
And we are ready for the final journey.

MARY. O! what an awful, dreadful preparation!

MORT. We scale, this very night, the castle's walls;
The keys are in my pow'r; the guards we murder,
Then from thy chamber bear thee forcibly.

Each living soul must die beneath our hands,
That none remain who might disclose the deed.

MARY. And Drury, Paulet, my two keepers, they
Would sooner spill their dearest drop of blood.

MORT. They fall the very first beneath my steel.

MARY. What, Sir! Your uncle? How! your second father!

MORT. Must perish by my hand—I murder him!

MARY. O, bloody outrage!

MORTIMER. We have been absolv'd
Beforehand; I may perpetrate the worst;—
I can, I will do so!

MARY. O dreadful, dreadful!

MORT. And should I be oblig'd to kill the Queen,
I've sworn upon the host, it must be done!

MARY. No, Mortimer; ere so much blood for me.—

MORT. What is the life of all compar'd to thee,
And to my love? The bond which holds the world
Together may be loos'd, a second deluge
Come rolling on, and swallow all creation!
Henceforth I value nothing; ere I quit
My hold on thee, may earth and time be ended!

MARY (*retiring*).
Heav'ns! Sir, what language, and what looks!
They scare,
They frighten me!

MORTIMER (*with unsteady looks, expressive of quiet madness*).
Life's but a moment—death
Is but a moment too. Why! let them drag me
To Tyburn, let them tear me limb from limb,
With red-hot pincers—
[*Violently approching her with extended arms.*
If I clasp but thee
Within my arms, thou fervently belov'd!

MARY. Madman, avaunt!
MORTIMER. To rest upon this bosom,
To press upon this passion-breathing mouth—
MARY. Leave me, for God's sake, Sir; let me go in—
MORT. He is a madman who neglects to clasp
His bliss in folds that never may be loosed,
When Heav'n has kindly giv'n it to his arms.
I will deliver you, and though it cost
A thousand lives, I do it: but I swear,
As God 's in Heav'n, I will possess you too!
MARY. O! Will no God, no angel shelter me?
Dread destiny! thou throw'st me, in thy wrath,
From one tremendous terror to the other!
Was I then born to waken nought but frenzy?
Do hate and love conspire alike to fright me?
MORT. Yes, glowing as their hatred is my love;
They would behead thee, they would wound this neck,
So dazzling white, with the disgraceful axe!
O! offer to the living god of joy
What thou must sacrifice to bloody hate!
Inspire thy happy lover with those charms
Which are no more thine own. Those golden locks
Are forfeit to the dismal pow'rs of death,
O! use them to entwine thy slave for ever!
MARY. Alas! alas! what language must I hear!
My woe, my suff'rings should be sacred to you,
Although my royal brows are so no more.
MORT. The crown is fallen from thy brows, thou hast
No more of earthly majesty. Make trial,
Raise thy imperial voice, see if a friend,
If a deliverer will rise to save you.
Thy moving form alone remains, the high,

The godlike influence of thy heav'nly beauty ;
This bids me venture all, this arms my hand
With might, and drives me tow'rds the headsman's axe.

MARY. O ! Who will save me from his raging madness?

MORT. Service that's bold, demands a bold reward.
Why shed their blood the daring? Is not life
Life's highest good? And he a madman, who
Casts life away ? First will I take my rest
Upon the breast that glows with love's own fire !
[*He presses her violently to his bosom.*

MARY. Oh, must I call for help against the man
Who would deliver me !

MORTIMER. Thou'rt not unfeeling,
The world ne'er censur'd thee for frigid rigor ;
The fervent pray'r of love can touch thy heart.
Thou mad'st the minstrel Rizzio blest, and gavest
Thyself a willing prey to Bothwell's arms.

MARY. Presumptuous man !

MORTIMER. *He* was indeed thy tyrant,
Thou trembled'st at his rudeness, whilst thou lov'd'st him ;
Well then—if only terror can obtain thee—
By the infernal gods !

MARY. Away—you're mad !

MORT. I'll teach thee then before *me* too to tremble—

KENNEDY (*entering suddenly*).
They're coming—they approach—the Park is fill'd
With men in arms.

MORTIMER (*starting, and catching at his sword*).
I will defend you—I—

MARY. O Hannah ! save me, save me from his hands.
Where shall I find, poor suff'rer, an asylum?

O! to what saint shall I address my pray'rs?
Here force assails me, and within is murder!
[*She flies towards the house,* KENNEDY *follows her.*

SCENE VII.

MORTIMER, PAULET, *and* DRURY *rush in in the greatest consternation.—Attendants hasten over the Stage.*

PAUL. Shut all the portals—draw the bridges up—
MORT. What is the matter, uncle?
PAULET. Where is the murd'ress?
Down with her, down into the darkest dungeon!
MORT. What is the matter? What has pass'd?
PAULET. The Queen!
Accursed hand! Infernal machination!
MORT. The Queen! What Queen?
PAUL. What Queen?
The Queen of England;—
She has been murder'd on the road to London.
[*Hastens into the house.*

SCENE VIII.

MORTIMER, *soon after,* O'KELLY.

MORTIMER (*after a pause*).
Am I then mad? Came not one running by
But now, and cried aloud, The—
No, no! I did but dream. A fev'rish fancy
Paints that upon my mind as true and real
Which but existed in my frantic thoughts.
Who's there? It is O'Kelly. So dismay'd!
O'KELLY (*rushing in*).
Flee, Mortimer, O! flee—for all is lost!
MORT. What, then, is lost?

O'KELLY. Stand not on question. Think
On speedy flight.
MORTIMER. What has occurred?
O'KELLY. Sauvage,
That madman, struck the blow.
MORTIMER. It is then true!
O'KEL. True, true—O! save yourself.
MORTIMER (*exultingly*).
The Queen is murder'd—
And Mary shall ascend the English throne!
O'KEL. Is murder'd! Who said that?
MORTIMER. Yourself.
O'KELLY. She lives,
And I, and you, and all of us are lost.
MORT. She lives!
O'KELLY. The blow was badly aim'd, her cloak
Receiv'd it. Shrewsbury disarm'd the murd'rer.
MORT. She lives!
O'KELLY. She lives to whelm us all in ruin;
Come, they surround the park already; come—
MORT. Who did this frantic deed?
O'KELLY. It was the monk
From Toulon, whom you saw immers'd in thought,
As in the chapel the Pope's bull was read,
Which pour'd anathemas upon the Queen.
He wish'd to take the nearest, shortest way
To free, with one bold stroke, the church of God,
And gain the crown of martyrdom:—he trusted
His purpose only to the priest, and struck
The fatal blow upon the road to London.
MORTIMER (*after a long silence*).
Alas! a fierce destructive fate pursues thee,
Unhappy one! Yes—now thy death is fix'd;

Thy very angel has prepar'd thy fall!

O'KEL. Say, whither will you take your flight? I go
To hide me in the forests of the north.

MORT. Fly thither, and may God attend your flight;
I will remain, and still attempt to save
My love; if not, my bed shall be upon her grave.

[*Exeunt at different sides.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*Antechamber.*

COUNT AUBESPINE, *the* EARLS *of* KENT *and* LEICESTER.

AUB. How fares her Majesty? My Lords, you see me
Still stunn'd, and quite beside myself for terror.
How happen'd it? How was it possible
That, in the midst of this most loyal people—

LEIC. The deed was not attempted by the people.
The assassin was the subject of your king,
A Frenchman.

AUBESPINE. Sure a lunatic.

LEIC. A Papist,
Count Aubespine!

SCENE II.

Enter BURLEIGH *in conversation with* DAVISON.

BURLEIGH. Sir, let the death-warrant
Be instantly made out, and pass the seal;
Then let it be presented to the Queen;
Her Majesty must sign it. Hasten, Sir,
We have no time to lose.

DAVISON. It shall be done. [*Exit.*

AUB. My Lord High Treasurer, my faithful heart
Shares in the just rejoicings of the realm.

Prais'd be almighty Heav'n, who hath averted
Assassination from our much-lov'd Queen!

BUR. Prais'd be his name, who thus hath turn'd to scorn
The malice of our foes!

AUBESPINE. May Heav'n confound
The perpetrator of this cursed deed!

BUR. Its perpetrator and its base contriver!

AUB. Please you, my Lord, to bring me to the Queen,
That I may lay the warm congratulations
Of my imperial master at her feet.

BUR. There is no need of this.

AUBESPINE (*officiously*). My Lord of Burleigh,
I know my duty.

BURLEIGH. Sir, your duty is
To quit, and that without delay, this kingdom.

AUBESPINE (*stepping back with surprise*).
What! How is this?

BURLEIGH. The sacred character
Of an Ambassador to-day protects you,
But not to-morrow.

AUBESPINE. What's my crime?

BURLEIGH. Should I
Once name it, there were then no pardon for it.

AUB. I hope, my Lord, my charge's privilege—

BUR. Screens not a traitor.

LEICESTER *and* KENT. Traitor! How?

AUBESPINE. My Lord,
Consider well—

BURLEIGH. Your passport was discover'd
In the assassin's pocket.

KENT. Righteous Heaven!

AUB. Sir, many passports are subscrib'd by me,
I cannot know the secret thoughts of men.

BUR. He in your house confess'd, and was absolv'd—
AUB. My house is open—
BURLEIGH. To *our* enemies.
AUB. I claim a strict inquiry—
BURLEIGH. Tremble at it—
AUB. My monarch in my person is insulted,
He will annul the marriage contract.
BURLEIGH. *That*
My royal mistress has annull'd already;
England will not unite herself with France.
My Lord of Kent, I give to you the charge
To see Count Aubespine embark'd in safety.
The furious populace has storm'd his palace,
Where a whole arsenal of arms was found;
Should he be found, they'll tear him limb from limb.
Conceal him till their fury is abated,—
You answer for his life.
AUBESPINE. I go—I leave
This kingdom, where they sport with public treaties,
And trample on the laws of nations. Yet
My monarch, be assur'd, will vent his rage
In direst vengeance!
BURLEIGH. Let him seek it here.
[*Exeunt* KENT *and* AUBESPINE.

SCENE III.

LEICESTER, BURLEIGH.

LEIC. And thus you loose, yourself, the knot of union
Which you officiously, uncall'd for, bound!
You have deserv'd but little of your country,
My Lord; this trouble was superfluous.

BUR. My aim was good, though fate declared against it;
Happy is he who has so fair a conscience!

LEIC. Well know we the mysterious mien of Burleigh,
When he is on the hunt for deeds of treason.
Now you are in your element, my Lord;
A monstrous outrage has been just committed,
And darkness veils, as yet, its perpetrators:—
Now will a court of inquisition rise;
Each word, each look be weigh'd; men's very thoughts
Be summon'd to the bar. You are, my Lord,
The mighty man, the Atlas of the state,
All England's weight lies upon your shoulders.

BUR. In you, my Lord, I recognize my master;
For such a victory as your eloquence
Has gain'd I cannot boast.

LEICESTER. What means your lordship?

BUR. You were the man who knew, behind my back,
To lure the Queen to Fotheringay castle.

LEIC. Behind your back! When did I fear to act
Before your face?

BURLEIGH. *You* led her Majesty?
O, no—*you* led her not—it was the Queen
Who was so gracious as to lead *you* thither.

LEIC. What mean you, my Lord, by that?

BURLEIGH. The noble part
You forc'd the Queen to play! The glorious triumph
Which you prepar'd for her! Too gracious princess!
So shamelessly, so wantonly to mock
Thy unsuspecting goodness, to betray thee
So pitiless to thy exulting foe!
This, then, is the magnanimity, the grace
Which suddenly possess'd you in the council!

The Stuart is for this so despicable,
So weak an enemy, that it would scarce
Be worth the pains to stain us with her blood.
A specious plan! and sharply pointed too;
'Tis only pity this sharp point is broken.

LEIC. Unworthy wretch!—this instant follow me,
And answer at the throne this insolence.

BUR. You'll find me there, my Lord; and look you well
That *there* your eloquence desert you not. [*Exit.*

SCENE IV.

LEICESTER, *alone; then* MORTIMER.

LEIC. I am detected! All my plot's disclosed!
How has my evil genius track'd my steps!
Alas! if he has proofs, if she should learn
That I have held a secret correspondence
With her worst enemy, how criminal
Shall I appear to her! How false will then
My counsel seem, and all the fatal pains
I took to lure the Queen to Fotheringay!
I've shamefully betray'd, I have exposed her
To her detested enemy's revilings!
O! never, never can she pardon that.
All will appear as if premeditated.
The bitter turn of this sad interview,
The triumph and the tauntings of her rival;
Yes, e'en the murd'rous hand, which had prepar'd
A bloody, monstrous, unexpected fate;
All, all will be ascribed to my suggestions!
I see no rescue!—nowhere—Ha! Who comes?

[MORTIMER *enters, in the most violent uneasiness, and looks with apprehension round him.*

MORT. Lord Leicester! Is it you? Are we alone?
LEIC. Ill-fated wretch, away! What seek you here?
MORT. They are upon our track—upon yours, too.
Be vigilant!
LEICESTER. Away, away!
MORTIMER. They know
That private conferences have been held
At Aubespine's—
LEICESTER. What's that to me?
MORTIMER. They know, too,
That the assassin—
LEICESTER. That is your affair—
Audacious wretch! to dare to mix my name
In your detested outrage: go; defend
Your bloody deeds yourself!
MORTIMER. But only hear me.
LEICESTER (*violently enraged*).
Down, down to hell! Why cling you at my heels
Like an infernal spirit! I disclaim you—
I know you not—I make no common cause
With murderers!
MORTIMER. You will not hear me, then!
I came to warn you—*you*, too, are detected.
LEIC. How! What?
MORTIMER. Lord Burleigh went to Fotheringay
Just as the luckless deed had been attempted,
Search'd with strict scrutiny the Queen's apartments,
And found there—
LEICESTER. What?
MORTIMER. A letter, which the Queen
Had just addressed to you—
LEICESTER. Unhappy woman!—

MORT. In which she calls on you to keep your word,
Renews the promise of her hand, and mentions
The picture which she sent you.
LEICESTER. Death and hell!
MORT. Lord Burleigh has the letter—
LEICESTER. I am lost!
[*During the following speech of* MORTIMER, LEICESTER *goes up and down, as in despair.*
MORT. Improve the moment; be beforehand with him,
And save yourself—save her! An oath can clear
Your fame; contrive excuses to avert
The worst. *I* am disarm'd, can do no more;
My comrades are dispers'd—to pieces fall'n
Our whole confed'racy. For Scotland I,
To rally such new friends as there I may.
'Tis now your turn, my Lord—try what your weight,
What bold assurance can effect.
LEICESTER (*stops suddenly, as if resolved*). I will—
[*Goes to the door, opens it, and calls.*
Who waits without? Guards! seize this wretched traitor!
[*To the Officer, who comes in with soldiers.*
And guard him closely. A most dreadful plot
Is brought to light—I'll to her Majesty.
MORTIMER (*stands for a time petrified with wonder; collects himself soon, and follows* LEICESTER *with his looks expressive of the most sovereign contempt*).
Infamous wretch!—But I deserve it all.
Who told me then to trust this practis'd villain?
Now o'er my head he strides, and on my fall
He builds the bridge of safety!—be it so,
Go, save thyself—my lips are seal'd for ever;—

I will not join e'en thee in my destruction—
I would not own thee, no, not e'en in death;
Life is the faithless villain's only good!

[*To the Officer of the Guard, who steps forward to seize him.*

What wilt thou, slave of tyranny, with me?
I laugh to scorn thy threat'nings—I am free.

[*Drawing a dagger.*

OFFIC. He's arm'd;—rush in, and wrest his weapon from him.

[*They rush upon him, he defends himself.*

MORTIMER (*raising his voice*).

And in this latest moment shall my heart
Expand itself in freedom, and my tongue
Shall break this long constraint. Curse and destruction
Light on you all, who have betray'd your faith,
Your God, and your true Sov'reign! Who, alike
To earthly Mary false as to the heav'nly,
Have sold your duties to this bastard Queen!

OFFIC. Hear you these blasphemies? Rush forward—seize him!

MORT. Beloved Queen! I could not set thee free;
Yet take a lesson from me how to die.
Mary, thou holy one, O! pray for me!
And take me to thy heav'nly home on high!

[*Stabs himself, and falls into the arms of the Guard.*

SCENE V.

The Apartment of the Queen.

ELIZABETH, *with a letter in her hand*, BURLEIGH.

ELIZ. To lure me thither! trifle with me thus!
The traitor! Thus to lead me, as in triumph,

Into the presence of his paramour!
O, Burleigh! ne'er was woman so deceiv'd.

BUR. I cannot yet conceive what potent means,
What magic he exerted, to surprise
My Queen's accustom'd prudence.

ELIZABETH. O, I die
For shame! How must he laugh to scorn my weakness!
I thought to humble *her*, and was myself
The object of her bitter scorn.

BURLEIGH. By this
You see how faithfully I counsell'd you.

ELIZ. O, I am sorely punish'd, that I turn'd
My ear from your wise counsels; yet I thought
I might confide in him. Who could suspect,
Beneath the vows of faithfullest devotion,
A deadly snare? In whom can I confide,
When he deceives me? He, whom I have made
The greatest of the great, and ever set
The nearest to my heart, and in this court
Allow'd to play the master and the king.

BUR. Yet in that very moment he betray'd you,
Betray'd you to this wily Queen of Scots.

ELIZ. O, she shall pay me for it with her life!
Is the death-warrant ready?

BURLEIGH. 'Tis prepar'd
As you commanded.

ELIZABETH. She shall surely die—
He shall behold her fall, and fall himself!
I've driven him from my heart. No longer love,
Revenge alone is there: and high as once
He stood, so low and shameful be his fall!
A monument of my severity,

As once the proud example of my weakness.
Conduct him to the Tower; let a commission
Of peers be nam'd to try him. He shall feel
In its full weight the rigor of the law.

BUR. But he will seek thy presence; he will clear—

ELIZ. How can he clear himself? Does not the letter
Convict him? O, his crimes are manifest!

BUR. But thou art mild and gracious! His appearance,
His pow'rful presence—

ELIZABETH. I will never see him;
No never, never more. Are orders giv'n
Not to admit him, should he come?

BURLEIGH. 'Tis done.

PAGE (*entering*).
The Earl of Leicester!

ELIZABETH. The presumptuous man!
I will not see him. Tell him that I will not.

PAGE. I am afraid to bring my Lord this message,
Nor would he credit it.

ELIZABETH. And I have raised him
So high that my own servants tremble more
At him than me!

BURLEIGH (*to the* PAGE). The Queen forbids his presence.
[*The Page retires slowly.*

ELIZABETH (*after a pause*).
Yet, if it still were possible? If he
Could clear himself? Might it not be a snare
Laid by the cunning one, to sever me
From my best friend—the ever treach'rous harlot!
She might have writ the letter but to raise
Pois'nous suspicion in my heart, to ruin
The man she hates.

BURLEIGH. Yet, gracious Queen, consider—

SCENE VI.

LEICESTER (*bursts open the door with violence, and enters with an imperious air*).

LEIC. Fain would I see the shameless man who dares
Forbid me the apartments of my Queen!—

ELIZABETH (*avoiding his sight*).
Audacious slave!

LEICESTER. To turn me from the door!
If for a Burleigh she be visible,
She must be so to me!

BURLEIGH. My Lord, you are
Too bold, without permission to intrude—

LEIC. My Lord, you are too arrogant, to take
The lead in these apartments. What! Permission!
I know of none who stands so high at court
As to permit my doings, or refuse them.
[*Humbly approaching* ELIZABETH.
'Tis from my Sov'reign's lips alone that *I*—

ELIZABETH (*without looking at him*).
Out of my sight, deceitful, worthless traitor!

LEIC. 'Tis not my gracious Queen I hear, but Burleigh,
My enemy, in these ungentle words.
To my imperial mistress I appeal;
Thou hast lent him thine ear; I ask the like.

ELIZ. Speak, shameless wretch! Increase your crime—deny it—

LEIC. Dismiss this troublesome intruder first.
Withdraw, my Lord; it is not of your office
To play the third man here: between the Queen
And me there is no need of witnesses.
Retire—

ELIZABETH (*to* BURLEIGH).
Remain, my Lord; 'tis my command.

LEIC. What has a third to do 'twixt thee and me?
I have to clear myself before my Queen,
My worshipp'd Queen; I will maintain the rights
Which thou hast given me: these rights are sacred,
And I insist upon it that my Lord
Retire—

ELIZABETH. This haughty tone befits you well.

LEIC. It well befits me; am not I the man,
The happy man, to whom thy gracious favor
Has giv'n the highest station? this exalts me
Above this Burleigh, and above them all.
Thy heart imparted me this rank, and what
Thy favor gave, by Heav'ns I will maintain
At my life's hazard! Let him go, it needs
Two moments only to exculpate me.

ELIZ. Think not with cunning words to hide the truth.

LEIC. That fear from him, so voluble of speech:
But what I say is to the heart address'd;
And I will justify what I have dar'd
To do, confiding in thy gen'rous favor,
Before thy heart alone. I recognize
No other jurisdiction.

ELIZABETH. Base deceiver!
'Tis this, e'en this, which above all condemns you.
My Lord, produce the letter. [*To* BURLEIGH.

BURLEIGH. Here it is.

LEICESTER (*running over the letter without losing his presence of mind*).
'Tis Mary Stuart's hand—

ELIZABETH. Read, and be dumb!

LEICESTER (*having read it quietly*).
Appearance is against me; yet I hope
I shall not by appearances be judg'd.

ELIZ. Can you deny your secret correspondence
With Mary?—that *she* sent and *you* receiv'd
Her picture, that you gave her hopes of rescue?
LEIC. It were an easy matter, if I felt
That I were guilty of a crime, to challenge
The testimony of my enemy:
Yet bold is my good conscience. I confess
That she hath said the truth.
ELIZABETH. Well then, thou wretch!
BUR. His own words sentence him—
ELIZABETH. Out of my sight!
Away! Conduct the traitor to the tow'r!
LEIC. I am no traitor; it was wrong, I own,
To make a secret of this step to thee;—
Yet pure was my intention, it was done
To search into her plots and to confound them.
ELIZ. Vain subterfuge!
BUR. And do you think, my Lord—
LEIC. I've play'd a dang'rous game, I know it well,
And none but Leicester dare be bold enough
To risk it at this court. The world must know
How I detest this Stuart, and the rank
Which here I hold, my monarch's confidence,
With which she honors me, must sure suffice
To overturn all doubt of my intentions.
Well may the man thy favor above all
Distinguishes, pursue a daring course
To do his duty!
BURLEIGH. If the the course was good,
Wherefore conceal it?
LEICESTER. You are us'd, my Lord,
To prate before you act—the very chime
Of your own deeds. This is your manner, Lord.

But mine is first to act, and then to speak.

BUR. Yes; now you speak, because you must.

LEICESTER (*measuring him proudly and disdainfully with his eyes*).

And *you*
Boast of a wonderful, a mighty action,
That *you* have sav'd the Queen, have snatch'd away
The mask from treach'ry:—all is known to *you;*
You think, forsooth, that nothing can escape
Your penetrating eyes. Poor, idle boaster!
In spite of all your cunning, Mary Stuart
Was free to day, had *I* not hinder'd it.

BUR. How? *you?*

LEICESTER. Yes *I*, my Lord: the Queen confided
In Mortimer; she open'd to the youth
Her inmost soul! Yes, she went further still;
She gave him, too, a secret bloody charge,
Which Paulet had before refus'd with horror.
Say, is it so, or not?

[*The* QUEEN *and* BURLEIGH *look at one another with astonishment.*

BURLEIGH. Whence know you this?

LEIC. Nay, is it not a fact? Now answer me!
And where, my Lord, where were your thousand eyes,
Not to discover Mortimer was false?
That he, the Guise's tool, and Mary's creature,
A raging Papist, daring fanatic,
Was come to free the Stuart and to murder
The Queen of England!

ELIZABETH (*with the utmost astonishment*).

How! This Mortimer?

LEIC. 'Twas he through whom our correspondence pass'd.

This plot it was which introduc'd me to him.
This very day she was to have been torn
From her confinement; he, this very moment,
Disclos'd his plan to me: I took him pris'ner
And gave him to the guard, when in despair
To see his work o'erturn'd, himself unmask'd,
He slew himself!

ELIZABETH. O, I indeed have been
Deceiv'd beyond example, Mortimer!

BUR. This happen'd then but now? Since last we parted?

LEIC. For my own sake I must lament the deed—
That he was thus cut off. His testimony,
Were he alive, had full clear'd my fame,
And freed me from suspicion:—'twas for this
That I surrender'd him to open justice.
I thought to choose the most impartial course
To verify and fix my innocence
Before the world.

BURLEIGH. He kill'd himself, you say!
Is't so? Or did you kill him?

LEICESTER. Vile suspicion!
Hear but the guard who seiz'd him.
[*He goes to the door, and calls*
Ho! Who waits?
[*Enter the Officer of the guard.*
Sir, tell the Queen how Mortimer expir'd.

OFFIC. I was on duty in the palace porch,
When suddenly my Lord threw wide the door
And order'd me to take the knight in charge,
Denouncing him a traitor: upon this
He grew enrag'd, and with most bitter curses
Against our sov'reign, and our holy faith,
He drew a dagger, and before the guards

Could hinder his intention, plung'd the steel
Into his heart, and fell a lifeless corpse.

LEIC. 'Tis well; you may withdraw. Her Majesty
Has heard enough.

[*The Officer withdraws.*

ELIZABETH. O! what a deep abyss
Of monstrous deeds!

LEICESTER. Who was it then, my Queen,
Who sav'd you? Was it Burleigh? Did he know
The dangers which surrounded you? Did he
Avert them from your head? Your faithful Leicester
Was your good angel.

BURLEIGH. This same Mortimer
Died most conveniently for *you*, my Lord.

ELIZ. What I should say I know not. I believe you,
And I believe you not:—I think you guilty,
And yet I think you not. A curse on her
Who caus'd me all this anguish!

LEICESTER. She must die—
I now myself consent unto her death.
I formerly advis'd you to suspend
The sentence, till some arm should rise anew
On her behalf; the case has happen'd now,
And I demand her instant execution.

BUR. You give this counsel? *You?*

LEICESTER. Howe'er it wound
My feelings to be forc'd to this extreme,
Yet now I see most clearly, now I feel
That the Queen's welfare asks this bloody victim.
'Tis my proposal, therefore, that the writ
Be drawn at once, to fix the execution.

BURLEIGH (*to the* QUEEN).
Since then his lordship shows such earnest zeal,

Such loyalty, 'twere well were he appointed
To see the execution of the sentence.

LEIC. Who? *I?*

BURLEIGH. Yes, *you;* you surely ne'er could find
A better means to shake off the suspicion
Which rests upon you still, than to command
Her, whom 'tis said you love, to be beheaded.

ELIZABETH (*looking steadfastly at* LEICESTER).
My Lord advises well. So be it, then!

LEIC. It were but fit that my exalted rank
Should free me from so mournful a commission,
Which would indeed, in ev'ry sense, become
A Burleigh better than the Earl of Leicester.
The man who stands so near the royal person
Should have no knowledge of such fatal scenes:
But yet, to prove my zeal, to satisfy
My Queen, I waive my charge's privilege,
And take upon myself this hateful duty.

ELIZ. Lord Burleigh shall partake this duty with you.
[*To* BURLEIGH.
So be the warrant instantly prepar'd.
[BURLEIGH *withdraws; a tumult heard without.*

SCENE VII.

The QUEEN, *the* EARL OF KENT.

ELIZ. How now, my Lord of Kent? What uproar's this
I hear without?

KENT. My Queen, it is thy people,
Who, round the palace rang'd, impatiently
Demand to see their sov'reign.

ELIZABETH. What's their wish?

KENT. A panic terror has already spread
Through London that thy life has been attempted;

That murderers commission'd from the Pope
Beset thee ; that the Catholics have sworn
To rescue from her prison Mary Stuart,
And to proclaim her Queen. Thy loyal people
Believe it, and are mad—her head alone
Can quiet them—this day must be her last.

ELIZ. How ! Will they force me, then ?

KENT. They are resolv'd—

SCENE VIII.

Enter BURLEIGH *and* DAVISON, *with a paper.*

ELIZ. Well, Davison ?

DAV. (*approaches earnestly*).
Your orders are obey'd,
My Queen—

ELIZABETH. What orders, Sir ?

[*As she is about to take the paper, she shudders, and starts back.*

O God !—

BURLEIGH. Obey
Thy people's voice ; it is the voice of God.

ELIZABETH (*irresolute, as if in contest with herself*).
O my good Lord, who will assure me now
That what I hear is my whole people's voice,
The voice of all the world ! Ah ! much I fear
That, if I now should listen to the wish
Of the wild multitude, a different voice
Might soon be heard ;—and that the very men
Who now by force oblige me to this step,
May, when 'tis taken, heavily condemn me !

SCENE IX.

Enter the EARL OF SHREWSBURY (*who enters with great emotion*).

Hold fast, my Queen, they wish to hurry thee;
[*Seeing* DAVISON *with the paper.*
Be firm—Or is it then decided?—is it
Indeed decided? I behold a paper
Of ominous appearance in his hand;
Let it not at this moment meet thy eyes,
My Queen!—

ELIZ. Good Shrewsbury! I am constrain'd—

SHREW. Who can constrain thee? Thou art Queen of England,
Here must thy Majesty assert its rights;
Command those savage voices to be silent,
Who take upon themselves to put constraint
Upon thy royal will, to rule thy judgment.
Fear only, blind conjecture, moves thy people;
Thou art thyself beside thyself; thy wrath
Is grievously provok'd: thou art but mortal,
And canst not thus ascend the judgment seat.

BUR. Judgment has long been past. It is not now
The time to speak, but execute the sentence.

KENT (*who, on* SHREWSBURY'S *entry, had retired, comes back*).
The tumult gains apace; there are no means
To moderate the people.

ELIZABETH (*to* SHREWSBURY). See, my Lord,
How they press on.

SHREWSBURY. I only ask a respite;
A single word trac'd by thy hand decides
The peace, the happiness of all thy life!
Thou hast for years consider'd, let not then
A moment rul'd by passion hurry thee—

But a short respite—recollect thyself!
Wait for a moment of tranquillity.

BURLEIGH (*violently*).

Wait for it—pause—delay—till flames of fire
Consume the realm; until the fifth attempt
Of murder be successful! God, indeed,
Hath thrice deliver'd thee; thy late escape
Was marvellous, and to expect again
A miracle would be to tempt thy God!

SHREW. That God, whose potent hand hath thrice preserv'd thee,
Who lent my aged feeble arm the strength
To overcome the madman:—he deserves
Thy confidence. I will not raise the voice
Of justice now, for now is not the time;
Thou canst not hear it in this storm of passion.
Yet listen but to this! Thou tremblest now
Before this living Mary—tremble rather
Before the murder'd, the beheaded Mary.
She will arise, and quit her grave, will range
A fiend of discord, an avenging ghost
Around thy realm, and turn thy people's hearts
From their allegiance. For as yet the Britons
Hate her, because they fear her; but most surely
Will they avenge her when she is no more.
They will no more behold the enemy
Of their belief, they will but see in her
The much-lamented issue of their kings
A sacrifice to jealousy and hate.
Then quickly shalt thou see the sudden change
When thou hast done the bloody deed; then go
Through London, seek thy people, which till now
Around thee swarm'd delighted; thou shalt see

Another England, and another people;
For then no more the godlike dignity
Of justice, which subdued thy subjects' hearts,
Will beam around thee. Fear, the dread ally
Of tyranny, will shudd'ring march before thee,
And make a wilderness in ev'ry street—
The last, extremest crime thou hast committed,
What head is safe, if the anointed fall?

ELIZ. Ah! Shrewsbury, you sav'd my life, you turn'd
The murd'rous steel aside; why let you not
The dagger take its course? then all these broils
Would have been ended; then, releas'd from doubt,
And free from blame, I should be now at rest
In my still peaceful grave. In very sooth,
I'm weary of my life, and of my crown.
If Heav'n decree that one of us two Queens
Must perish, to secure the other's life—
And sure it must be so—why should not I
Be she who yields? My people must decide;
I give them back the Sovereignty they gave.
God is my witness that I have not liv'd
For my own sake, but for my people's welfare.
If they expect from this false, fawning Stuart,
The younger sovereign, more happy days,
I will descend with pleasure from the throne,
Again repair to Woodstock's quiet bowers,
Where once I spent my unambitious youth;
Where, far remov'd from all the vanities
Of earthly power, I found within myself
True Majesty. I am not made to rule—
A ruler should be made of sterner stuff:
My heart is soft and tender. I have govern'd
These many years, this kingdom happily,

But then I only needed to make happy:
Now comes my first important regal duty,
And now I feel how weak a thing I am.

BUR. Now by mine honor, when I hear my Queen,
My royal liege, speak such unroyal words,
I should betray my office, should betray
My country, were I longer to be silent.
You say you love your people 'bove yourself,
Now prove it. Choose not peace for your own heart,
And leave your kingdom to the storms of discord.
Think on the church. Shall, with this Papist Queen,
The ancient superstition be renew'd?
The monk resume his sway, the Roman legate
In pomp march hither; lock our churches up.
Dethrone our monarchs? I demand of you
The souls of all your subjects—as you now
Shall act, they all are sav'd, or all are lost!
Here is no time for mercy;—to promote
Your people's welfare is your highest duty.
If Shrewsbury has sav'd your life, then I
Will save both you and England—that is more!

ELIZ. I would be left alone. No consolation,
No counsel, can be drawn from human aid
In this conjuncture:—I will lay my doubts
Before the Judge of all:—I am resolv'd
To act as He shall teach. Withdraw, my Lords.
[*To* DAVISON, *who lays the paper on the table.*
You, Sir, remain in waiting—close at hand.
[*The Lords withdraw;* SHREWSBURY *alone stands for a few moments before the* QUEEN, *regards her significantly, then withdraws slowly, and with an expression of the deepest anguish.*

SCENE X.

ELIZABETH *alone.*

O! servitude of popularity!
Disgraceful slavery! How weary am I
Of flattering this idol, which my soul
Despises in its inmost depth! O!, when
Shall I once more be free upon this throne?
I must respect the people's voice, and strive
To win the favor of the multitude,
And please the fancies of a mob, whom nought
But jugglers' tricks delight. O call not him
A king who needs must please the world: 'tis he
Alone who in his actions does not heed
The fickle approbation of mankind.
Have I then practis'd justice all my life
Shunn'd each despotic deed; have I done this
Only to bind my hands against this first,
This necessary act of violence?
My own example now condemns myself!
Had I but been a tyrant, like my sister,
My predecessor, I could fearless then
Have shed this royal blood:—but am I now
Just by my own free choice? No—I was forc'd
By stern necessity to use this virtue;
Necessity, which binds e'en monarchs' wills.
Surrounded by my foes, my people's love
Alone supports me on my envied throne.
All Europe's pow'rs confederate to destroy me;
The Pope's inveterate decree declares me
Accurst and excommunicated. France
Betrays me with a kiss, and Spain prepares
At sea a fierce exterminating war;

Thus stand I, in contention with the world,
A poor defenceless woman: I must seek
To veil the spot in my imperial birth
By which my father cast disgrace upon me:
In vain with princely virtues would I hide it:
The envious hatred of my enemies
Uncovers it, and places Mary Stuart
A threat'ning fiend before me evermore!
[*Walking up and down, with quick and agitated steps.*
O no! this fear must end. Her head must fall!
I *will* have peace. She is the very fury
Of my existence; a tormenting demon,
Which destiny has fasten'd on my soul.
Wherever I had planted me a comfort,
A flatt'ring hope, my way was ever cross'd
By this infernal viper! She has torn
My fav'rite, and my destined bridegroom from me.
The hated name of ev'ry ill I feel
Is Mary Stuart—were but she no more
On earth, I should be free as mountain air.
[*Standing still.*
With what disdain did she look down on me,
As if her eye should blast me like the lightning!
Poor, feeble wretch! I bear far other arms,
Their touch is mortal, and thou art no more.
[*Advancing to the table hastily, and taking the pen.*
I am a bastard, am I? Hapless wretch,
I am but so the while thou liv'st and breath'st.
[Thy death will make my birth legitimate.]
The moment I destroy thee, is the doubt
Destroy'd which hangs o'er my imperial right.
As soon as England has no other choice,
My mother's honor and my birthright triumphs!

[She signs with resolution; lets her pen then fall, and steps back with an expression of terror.—After a pause she rings.

SCENE XI.

ELIZABETH, DAVISON.

ELIZ. Where are their Lordships?

DAVISON. They are gone to quell
The tumult of the people. The alarm
Was instantly appeas'd, when they beheld
The Earl of Shrewsbury. That's he! exclaim'd
A hundred voices—that's the man—he sav'd
The Queen; hear *him*—the bravest man in England!
And now began the gallant Talbot, blam'd
In gentle words the people's violence,
And used such strong, persuasive eloquence,
That all were pacified, and silently
They slunk away.

ELIZABETH. The fickle multitude!
Which turns with ev'ry wind. Unhappy he
Who leans upon this reed! 'Tis well, Sir William;
You may retire again—

[As he is going towards the door.

And, Sir, this paper,
Receive it back; I place it in your hands.

DAVISON (*casts a look upon the paper, and starts back*).
My gracious Queen—thy name!—'tis then decided.

ELIZ. I had but to subscribe it—I have done so—
A paper sure cannot decide—a name
Kills not—

DAVISON. Thy name, my Queen, beneath this paper
Is most decisive—kills—'tis like the lightning,
Which blasteth as it flies! This fatal scroll

Commands the Sheriff and Commissioners
To take departure straight for Fortheringay,
And to the Queen of Scots announce her death,
Which must at dawn be put in execution.
There is no respite, no discretion, here—
As soon as I have parted with this writ,
Her race is run—

ELIZABETH. Yes, Sir, the Lord has plac'd
This weighty business in your feeble hands;
Seek him in pray'r, to light you with his wisdom;
I go—and leave you, Sir, to do your duty. [*Going.*

DAV. No; leave me not, my Queen, till I have heard
Your will. The only wisdom that I need
Is, word for word, to follow your commands.
Say, have you plac'd this warrant in my hands
To see that it be speedily enforced?

ELIZ. That you must do, as your own prudence dictates

DAVISON (*interrupting her quickly, and alarmed*).
Not mine—O God forbid! Obedience is
My only prudence here. No point must now
Be left to be decided by your servant.
A small mistake would here be regicide,
A monstrous crime, from which my soul recoils!
Permit me, in this weighty act, to be
Your passive instrument, without a will;—
Tell me in plain undoubted terms your pleasure,
What with the bloody mandate I should do.

ELIZ. Its name declares its meaning.

DAVISON. Do you, then,
My Liege, command its instant execution?

ELIZ. I said not that; I tremble but to think it.

DAV. Shall I retain it, then, till further orders?

ELIZ. At your own risk; you answer the event.

DAV. I!—gracious Heavens!—O speak, my Queen, your pleasure!

ELIZ. My pleasure is, that this unhappy bus'ness
Be no more mention'd to me; that at last
I may be freed from it, and that for ever.

DAV. It costs you but a word—determine then;
What shall I do with this mysterious scroll?

ELIZ. I *have* declar'd it; plague me, Sir, no longer.

DAV. You *have* declar'd it? say you? O, my Queen,
You have said nothing. Please my gracious mistress
But to remember—

ELIZABETH (*stamps on the ground*).
Insupportable!

DAV. O, be indulgent to me! I have enter'd
Unwittingly, not many months ago,
Upon this office; I know not the language
Of courts and kings. I ever have been rear'd
In simple, open wise, a plain blunt man.
Be patient with me; nor deny your servant
A light to lead him clearly to his duty.
[*He approaches her in a supplicating posture, she turns her back on him; he stands in despair; then speaks with a tone of resolution.*
Take, take again this paper—take it back!
Within my hands, it is a glowing fire.
Select not me, my Queen; select not me
To serve you in this terrible conjuncture.

ELIZ. Go, Sir;—fulfill the duty of your office. [*Exit.*

SCENE XII.

DAVISON, *then* BURLEIGH.

DAV. She goes! She leaves me doubting, and perplex'd

With this dread paper! How to act I know not;
Should I retain it, should I forward it?
[*To* BURLEIGH, *who enters.*
Oh! I am glad that you are come, my Lord,
'Tis you who have preferr'd me to this charge;
Now free me from it, for I undertook it,
Unknowing how responsible it made me.
Let me then seek again th' obscurity
In which you found me; this is not my place.

BUR. How now? Take courage, Sir! Where is the warrant?
The Queen was with you.

DAVISON. She has quitted me
In bitter anger. O advise me, help me,
Save me from this fell agony of doubt!
My Lord, here is the warrant: it is sign'd!

BUR. Indeed? O give it, give it me!

DAVISON. I may not.

BUR. How!

DAV. She has not yet explain'd her final will.

BUR. Explain'd? She has subscrib'd it;—give it me.

DAV. I am to execute it, and I am not.
Great Heavens! I know not what I am to do!

BURLEIGH (*urging more violently*).
It must be now, this moment, executed—
The warrant, Sir. You're lost if you delay.

DAV. So am I, also, if I act too rashly.

BUR. What strange infatuation. Give it me.
[*Snatches the paper from him, and exit with it.*

DAV. What would you? Hold! You will be my destruction!

ACT V.

SCENE I.

The Scene the same as in the First Act.

HANNAH KENNEDY *in deep mourning, her eyes still red from weeping in great but quiet anguish, is employed in sealing letters and parcels. Her sorrow often interrupts her occupation, and she is seen at such intervals to pray in silence.* PAULET *and* DRURY, *also in mourning, enter, followed by many servants, who bear golden and silver vessels, mirrors, paintings, and other valuables, and fill the back part of the stage with them:* PAULET *delivers to the Nurse a box of jewels and a paper, and seems to inform her, by signs, that it contains the inventory of the effects the* QUEEN *had brought with her. At the sight of these riches, the anguish of the Nurse is renewed; she sinks into a deep, gloomy melancholy, during which* DRURY, PAULET, *and the Servants, silently retire.*

MELVIL *enters.*

KENNEDY (*screams aloud, as soon as she observes him*).
Melvil! Is't you? Behold I you again?

MEL. Yes, faithful Kennedy, we meet once more.

KEN. After this long, long, painful separation!

MEL. A most unhappy, bitter meeting, this!

KEN. You come—

MELVIL. To take an everlasting leave
Of my dear Queen—to bid a last farewell!

KEN. And now at length, now on the fatal morn
Which brings her death, they grant our royal Lady
The presence of her friends. O, worthy Sir,
I will not question you how you have far'd
Nor tell you all the suff'rings we've endured,

Since you were torn away from us :—alas !
There will be time enough for that hereafter.
O, Melvil, Melvil, why was it our fate
To see the dawn of this unhappy day !

MEL. Let us not melt each other with our grief.
Throughout my whole remaining life, as long
As ever it may be, I'll sit and weep ;
A smile shall never more light up these cheeks,
Ne'er will I lay this sable garb aside,
But lead henceforth a life of endless mourning.
Yet on this last sad day I will be firm ;
Pledge me your word to moderate your grief ;
And when the rest, of comfort all bereft,
Abandon'd to despair, wail round her, we
Will lead her with heroic resolution,
And be her staff upon the road to death !

KEN. Melvil ! You are deceiv'd, if you suppose
The Queen has need of our support to meet
Her death with firmness. *She* it is, my friend,
Who will exhibit the undaunted heart.
O ! trust me, Mary Stuart will expire
As best becomes a Heroine and Queen !

MEL. Receiv'd she firmly, then, the sad decree
Of death ?—'tis said that she was not prepar'd.

KEN. She was not ; yet they were far other terrors
Which made our Lady shudder : 'twas not death,
But her deliverer, which made her tremble.
Freedom was promis'd us ; this very night
Had Mortimer engag'd to bear us hence :
And thus the Queen, perplex'd 'twixt hope and fear,
And doubting still if she should trust her honor
And royal person to th' advent'rous youth,
Sat waiting for the morning. On a sudden

We hear a boist'rous tumult in the castle ;
Our ears are startled by repeated blows
Of many hammers, and we think we hear
The approach of our deliv'rers :—hope salutes us,
And suddenly and unresisted wakes
The sweet desire of life. And now at once
The portals are thrown open—it is Paulet,
Who comes to tell us—that—the carpenters
Erect beneath our feet the murd'rous scaffold !

[*She turns aside, overpowered by excessive anguish.*

MEL. O God in Heav'n ! O tell me, then, how bore
The Queen this terrible vicissitude?

KENNEDY (*after a pause, in which she has somewhat collected herself*).

Not by degrees can we relinquish life ;
Quick, sudden, in the twinkling of an eye
The separation must be made, the change
From temporal to eternal life ;—and God
Imparted to our mistress at this moment
His grace, to cast away each earthly hope,
And firm and full of faith to mount the skies.
No sign of pallid fear dishonor'd her ;
No word of mourning, 'till she heard the tidings
Of Leicester's shameful treach'ry, the sad fate
Of the deserving youth, who sacrificed
Himself for her : the deep, the bitter anguish
Of that old knight, who lost, through her, his last,
His only hope ; till then she shed no tear,—
'Twas then her tears began to flow, 'twas not
Her own, but others' woe which wrung them from her.

MEL. Where is she now? Can you not lead me to her?

KEN. She spent the last remainder of the night

In pray'r, and from her dearest friends she took
Her last farewell in writing :—then she wrote
Her will[1] with her own hand. She now enjoys
A moment of repose, the latest slumber
Refreshes her weak spirits.

MELVIL. Who attends her?

KEN. None but her women and physician Burgoyn :
You seem to look around you with surprise ;
Your eyes appear to ask me what should mean
This show of splendor in the house of death.
O, Sir, while yet we lived we suffer'd want ;
But at our death plenty returns to us.

SCENE II.

Enter MARGARET CURL.

KEN. How, Madam, fares the Queen? Is she awake?

CURL (*drying her tears*).
She is already dressed—she asks for you.

KEN. I go ;—
[*To* MELVIL, *who seems to wish to accompany her.*
But follow not until the Queen
Has been prepar'd to see you. [*Exit.*

CURL. Melvil, sure,
The ancient steward?

MELVIL. Yes, the same.

CURL. O, Sir,
This is a house which needs no steward now!
Melvil, you come from London ; can you give
No tidings of my husband?

MELVIL. It is said
He will be set at liberty as soon—

[1] The document is now in the British Museum.

CURL. As soon as our dear Queen shall be no more.
O, the unworthy, the disgraceful traitor!
He is our Lady's murderer—'tis said
It was his testimony which condemn'd her.
MEL. 'Tis true.
CURL. O, curse upon him!—be his soul
Condemn'd for ever!—he has borne false witness—
MEL. Think, Madam, what you say.
CURL. I will maintain it
With ev'ry sacred oath, before the court,
I will repeat it in his very face;
The world shall hear of nothing else. I say
That she dies innocent!
MELVIL. God grant it true!

SCENE III.

Enter HANNAH KENNEDY.

KENNEDY (*to* CURL).
Go, Madam, and require a cup of wine—
'Tis for our Lady.
MELVIL. Is the Queen then sick?
KEN. She thinks that she is strong; she is deceiv'd
By her heroic courage; she believes
She has no need of nourishment; yet still
A hard and painful task's allotted her.
Her enemies shall not enjoy the triumph;
They shall not say that fear hath blanch'd her cheeks,
When her fatigues have conquer'd human weakness.
MEL. May I approach her?
KENNEDY. She will come herself.

SCENE IV.

Enter BURGOYN; *two women of the chamber follow him, weeping, and in deep mourning.*

BURG. O, Melvil!

MELVIL. O, Burgoyn! [*They embrace silently.*

FIRST WOMAN (*to the* NURSE). She chose to be
Alone:—she wishes, at this awful moment,
For the last time, to commune with her God.

SCENE V.

Enter MARGARET CURL, *bearing a golden cup of wine; she places it hastily upon the table, and leans, pale and trembling, against a chair.*

MEL. How, Madam! What has frighten'd you?

KENNEDY. O God!

BURG. Speak, Madam.

CURL. What, alas! have I beheld!

MEL. Come to yourself, and say what you have seen!

CURL. As I went down the staircase which conducts
To the great hall below, a door stood open
I look'd into the chamber, and I saw—
O Heav'n!

MELVIL. What saw you?

CURL. All the walls were hung
With black; a spacious scaffold, too, o'erspread
With sable cloth, was rais'd above the floor,
And in the middle of the scaffold stood
A dreadful sable block! upon it lay
A naked, polish'd axe:—the hall was full
Of cruel people, crowding round the scaffold;
Who, with a horrid thirst for human blood,
Seem'd waiting for the victim!

THE WOMEN. Gracious Heav'n
Protect our Queen!

MELVIL. Be calm; the Queen approaches.

SCENE VI.

Enter MARY *in white and sumptuously arrayed, as for a festival: she wears hanging from her neck, on a row of small beads, an Agnus Dei; a rosary hangs from her girdle; she bears a crucifix in her hand, and a diadem of precious stones binds her hair; her large black veil is thrown back. On her entrance, all present fall back on both sides with the most violent expressions of anguish.* MELVIL *falls involuntarily upon his knees.*

MARY (*with quiet majesty, looking round the whole circle*).
Why these complaints? Why weep ye? Ye should rather
Rejoice with me, that now at length the end
Of my long woe approaches; that my shackles
Fall off, my prison opens, and my soul,
Delighted, mounts on seraph's wings, and seeks
The land of everlasting liberty.
When I was offer'd up to the oppression
Of my proud enemy, was forc'd to suffer
Ignoble taunts, and insults most unfitting
A free and sov'reign Queen, then was the time
To weep for me; but, as an earnest friend,
Beneficent and healing Death approaches.
All the indignities which I have suffer'd
On earth are cover'd by his sable wings.
The most degraded criminal's ennobled
By his last suff'rings, by his final exit;
I feel again the crown upon my brows,
And dignity possess my swelling soul!

[*Advancing a few steps.*

How! Melvil here! My worthy Sir, not so;
Arise; you rather come in time to see
The triumph of your mistress, than her death.
One comfort, which I never had expected,
Is granted me; that, after death, my name
Will not be quite abandon'd to my foes;
One friend at least, one partner of my faith,
Will be my witness in the hour of death.
Say, honest Melvil, how you far'd the while
In this inhospitable, hostile land?
For since the time they tore you from my side,
My fears for you have oft depress'd my soul.

MEL. No other evil gall'd me, but my grief
For thee, and that I wanted pow'r to serve thee.

MARY. How fares my chamberlain, old Didier?
But sure the faithful servant long has slept
The sleep of death, for he was full of years.

MEL. God hath not granted him as yet this grace;
He lives to see the grave o'erwhelm thy youth.

MARY. O! Could I but have felt, before my death,
The happiness of pressing one descendant
Of the dear blood of Stuart to my bosom.
But I must suffer in a foreign land,
None but my servants to bewail my fate!
Sir, to your loyal bosom I commit
My latest wishes. Bear then, Sir, my blessing
To the most Christian king, my royal brother,
And the whole royal family of France.
I bless the cardinal, my honor'd uncle,
And also Henry Guise, my noble cousin.
I bless the holy Father, the vicegerent
Of Christ on earth, who will, I trust, bless me.
I bless the King of Spain, who nobly offer'd

Himself as my deliv'rer, my avenger.
They are remember'd in my will: I hope
That they will not despise, how poor soe'er
They be, the presents of a heart which loves them.
[*Turning to her servants.*
I have bequeath'd you to my royal brother
Of France; he will protect you, he will give you
Another country, and a better home;
And if my last desire have any weight,
Stay not in England; let no haughty Briton
Glut his proud heart with your calamities,
Nor see those in the dust who once were mine.
Swear by this image of our suff'ring Lord
To leave this fatal land when I'm no more.

MELVIL (*touching the crucifix*).
I swear obedience, in the name of all.

MARY. What I, though poor and plunder'd, still possess,
Of which I am allow'd to make disposal,
Shall be amongst you shar'd; for I have hope
In this, at least, my will may be fulfill'd.
And what I wear upon the way to death
Is yours—nor envy me, on this occasion,
The pomp of earth upon the road to heav'n.
[*To the ladies of her chamber.*
To you, my Alice, Gertrude, Rosamund,
I leave my pearls, my garments: you are young,
And ornament may still delight your hearts.
You, Margaret, possess the nearest claims,
To you I should be gen'rous: for I leave you
The most unhappy woman of them all.
That I have not aveng'd your husband's fault
On you, I hope my legacy will prove.
The worth of gold, my Hannah, charms not thee;

Nor the magnificence of precious stones:
My memory, I know, will be to thee
The dearest jewel; take this handkerchief,
I work'd it for thee, in the hours of sorrow,
With my own hands, and my hot scalding tears
Are woven in the texture:—you will bind
My eyes with this, when it is time: this last
Sad service I would wish but from my Hannah.

KEN. O Melvil! I cannot support it.

MARY. Come,
Come all, and now receive my last farewell.

[*She stretches forth her hands; the* WOMEN *violently weeping, fall successively at her feet, and kiss her outstretched hand.*

Marg'ret, farewell—my Alice, fare thee well;
Thanks Burgoyn, for thy honest, faithful service—
Thy lips are hot, my Gertrude:—I have been
Much hated, yet have been as much belov'd.
May a deserving husband bless my Gertrude,
For this warm glowing heart is form'd for love.
Bertha, thy choice is better, thou hadst rather
Become the chaste and pious bride of heav'n;—
O! haste thee to fulfil thy vows;—the goods
Of earth are all deceitful;—thou may'st learn
This lesson from thy Queen. No more; farewell,
Farewell, farewell, my friends, farewell for ever.

[*She turns suddenly from them; all but* MELVIL *retire at different sides.*

SCENE, VII.

MARY, MELVIL.

MARY (*after the others are all gone*).
I have arrang'd all temporal concerns,
And hope to leave the world in debt to none;

Melvil, one thought alone there is, which binds
My troubled soul, nor suffers it to fly,
Delighted, and at liberty, to heav'n.

MEL. Disclose it to me; ease your bosom, trust
Your doubts, your sorrows, to your faithful friend.

MARY. I see eternity's abyss before me;—
Soon must I stand before the highest judge
And have not yet appeas'd the Holy One.
A priest of my religion is denied me,
And I disdain to take the sacrament,
The holy, heav'nly nourishment, from priests
Of a false faith; I die in the belief
Of my own church, for that alone can save.

MEL. Compose your heart; the fervent pious wish
Is priz'd in heaven as high as the performance.
The might of tyrants can but bind the hands,
The heart's devotion rises free to God,
The word is dead—'tis faith which brings to life.

MARY. The heart is not sufficient of itself;
Our faith must have some earthly pledge to ground
Its claims to the high bliss of heav'n. For this
Our God became incarnate, and inclos'd
Mysteriously his unseen heav'nly grace
Within the outward figure of a body.
The church it is, the holy one, the high one,
Which rears for us the ladder up to heav'n:—
'Tis call'd the Catholic—apostolic church,—
For 'tis but gen'ral faith can strengthen faith:
Where thousands worship and adore, the heat
Breaks out in flame, and borne on eagle wings,
The soul mounts upwards to the heav'n of heav'ns.
Ah! happy they, who for the glad communion
Of pious pray'r, meet in the house of God!

The altar is adorn'd, the tapers blaze,
The bell invites, the incense soars on high,
The bishop stands enrob'd, he takes the cup,
And blessing it declares the solemn mystery,
The transformation of the elements;
And the believing people fall delighted
To worship and adore the present Godhead.
Alas! I only am debarr'd from this;
The heav'nly benediction pierces not
My prison walls: its comfort is denied me.

MEL. Yes! it can pierce them—put thy trust in Him
Who is almighty—in the hand of faith,
The wither'd staff can send forth verdant branches;
And he who from the rock call'd living water,
He can prepare an altar in this prison,
Can change—

[*Seizing the cup, which stands upon the table.*
The earthly contents of this cup
Into a substance of celestial grace.

MARY. Melvil! O yes, I understand you, Melvil!
Here is no priest, no church, no sacrament;
But the Redeemer says, "When two or three
Are in my name assembled, I am with them."
What consecrates the priest? Say, what ordains him
To be the Lord's interpreter?—a heart
Devoid of guile, and a reproachless conduct.
Well, then, though unordain'd, be you my priest:
To you will I confide my last confession,
And take my absolution from your lips.

MEL. If then thy heart be with such zeal inflam'd,
I tell thee, that for thine especial comfort
The Lord may work a miracle. Thou say'st

Here is no priest, no church, no sacrament—
Thou err'st—here *is* a priest—here *is* a God ;
A god descends to thee in real presence.

[*At these words he uncovers his head, and shows a host in a golden vessel.*

I am a priest to hear thy last confession,
And to announce to thee the peace of God
Upon thy way to death. I have receiv'd
Upon my head the seven consecrations.
I bring thee, from his Holiness, this host,
Which, for thy use, himself has deign'd to bless.

MARY. Is then a heav'nly happiness prepar'd
To cheer me on the very verge of death ?
As an immortal one on golden clouds
Descends, as once the angel from on high,
Deliver'd the Apostle from his fetters :—
He scorns all bars, he scorns the soldier's sword,
He steps undaunted through the bolted portals,
And fills the dungeon with his native glory ;
Thus here the messenger of Heav'n appears,
When ev'ry earthly champion has deceiv'd me.
And you, my servant once, are now the servant
Of the Most High, and his immortal Word !
As before *me* your knees were wont to bend,
Before you, humbled, now I kiss the dust.

[*She sinks before him on her knees.*

MELVIL (*making over her the sign of the cross*).
Hear, Mary Queen of Scotland :—in the name
Of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
Hast thou examin'd carefully thy heart,
Swear'st thou, art thou prepar'd in thy confession
To speak the truth before the God of truth ?

MARY. Before my God and thee, my heart lies open.

MEL. What calls thee to the presence of the Highest?
MARY. I humbly do acknowledge to have err'd
Most grievously, I tremble to approach,
Sullied with sin, the God of purity.
MEL. Declare the sin which weighs so heavily
Upon thy conscience, since thy last confession.
MARY. My heart was filled with thoughts of envious hate
And vengeance took possession of my bosom.
I hope forgiveness of my sins from God,
Yet could I not forgive my enemy.
MEL. Repent'st thou of the sin? Art thou, in sooth,
Resolv'd to leave this world at peace with all?
MARY. As surely as I wish the joys of heav'n.
MEL. What other sin hath arm'd thy heart against thee?
MARY. Ah! not alone through hate; through lawless love
Have I still more abus'd the sov'reign good.
My heart was vainly turn'd towards the man
Who left me in misfortune, who deceiv'd me.
MEL. Repent'st thou of the sin? And hast thou turn'd
Thy heart from this idolatry to God?
MARY. It was the hardest trial I have pass'd;
This last of earthly bonds is torn asunder.
MEL. What other sin disturbs thy guilty conscience?
MARY. A bloody crime, indeed of ancient date,
And long ago confess'd; yet with new terrors
It now attacks me, black and grisly steps
Across my path, and shuts the gates of heav'n:
By my connivance fell the king, my husband—
I gave my hand and heart to a seducer—
By rigid penance I have made atonement;
Yet in my soul the worm is gnawing still.
MEL. Has then thy heart no other accusation
Which hath not been confess'd and wash'd away?

MARY. All you have heard, with which my heart is charg'd.
MEL. Think on the presence of Omniscience;
Think on the punishments with which the church
Threatens imperfect and reserv'd confession!
This is the sin to everlasting death,
For this is sinning 'gainst his Holy Spirit.
MARY. So may eternal grace with victory
Crown my last contest, as I wittingly
Have nothing hid—
MELVIL. How? Wilt thou then conceal
The crime from God for which thou art condemn'd?
Thou tell'st me nothing of the share thou hadst
In Babington, and Parry's bloody treason:
Thou diest for this a temporal death; for this
Wilt thou too die the everlasting death.
MARY. I am prepar'd to meet eternity;
Within the narrow limits of an hour
I shall appear before my judge's throne;
But, I repeat it, my confession's ended.
MEL. Consider well—the heart is a deceiver.
Thou hast perhaps, with sly equivocation,
The *word* avoided which would make thee guilty,
Although thy will was party to the crime.
Remember that no juggler's tricks can blind
The eye of fire which darts through ev'ry breast.
MARY. 'Tis true that I have call'd upon all princes
To free me from unworthy chains; yet 'tis
As true that neither by intent or deed
Have I attempted my oppressor's life.
MEL. Your secretaries, then, have witness'd falsely.
MARY. It is as I have said;—what they have witness'd
The Lord will judge.
MELVIL. Thou mount'st, then, satisfied

Of thy own innocence, the fatal scaffold?

MARY. God suffers me in mercy to atone,
By undeserved death, my youth's transgressions.

MELVIL. (*making over her the sign of the cross*).
Go, then, and expiate them all by death;
Sink a devoted victim on the altar;
Thus shall thy blood atone the blood thou'st spilt.
From female frailty were deriv'd thy faults;
Free from the weakness of mortality,
The spotless spirit seeks the blest abodes.
Now then, by the authority which God
Hath unto me committed, I absolve thee
From all thy sins—be as thy faith thy welfare!
[*He gives her the host.*
Receive the body which for thee was offer'd—
[*He takes the cup which stands upon the table, consecrates it with silent prayer, then presents it to her; she hesitates to take it, and makes signs to him to withdraw it.*
Receive the blood, which for thy sins was shed—
Receive it—'tis allow'd thee by the Pope,
To exercise in death the highest office
Of kings, the holy office of the priesthood.
[*She takes the cup.*
And as thou now in this his earthly body
Hast held with God mysterious communion,
So may'st thou henceforth, in his realm of joy,
Where sin no more exists, nor tears of woe,
A fair transfigur'd spirit, join thyself
For ever with the Godhead, and for ever.

He sets down the cup; hearing a noise, he covers his head, and goes to the door; Mary remains in silent devotion, on her knees.

MELVIL (*returning*). A painful conflict is in store for thee;
Feel'st thou within thee strength enough to smother
Each impulse of malignity and hate?

MARY. I fear not a relapse. I have to God
Devoted both my hatred and my love.

MEL. Well, then, prepare thee to receive my Lords
Of Leicester and of Burleigh. They are here.

SCENE VIII.

Enter BURLEIGH, LEICESTER, *and* PAULET.

[LEICESTER *remains in the background, without raising his eyes;* BURLEIGH, *who remarks his confusion, steps between him and the* QUEEN.

BUR. I come, my Lady Stuart, to receive
Your last commands and wishes.

MARY. Thanks, my Lord.

BUR. It is the pleasure of my royal mistress
That nothing reasonable be denied you.

MARY. My will, my Lord, declares my last desires;
I've plac'd it in the hand of Sir Amias,
And humbly beg that it may be fulfill'd.

PAUL. You may rely on this.

MARY. I beg that all
My servants unmolested may return
To France, or Scotland, as their wishes lead.

BUR. It shall be as you wish.

MARY. And since my body
Is not to rest in consecrated ground,
I pray you suffer this my faithful servant
To bear my heart to France, to my relations—
Alas! 'twas ever there.

BURLEIGH. It shall be done.

What wishes else?

MARY. Unto her Majesty
Of England bear a sister's salutation;
Tell her that from the bottom of my heart
I pardon her my death: most humbly, too,
I crave her to forgive me for the passion
With which I spoke to her. May God preserve her,
And bless her with a long and prosp'rous reign!

BUR. Say, do you still adhere to your resolve,
And still refuse assistance from the Dean?

MARY. My Lord, I've made my peace with God.
[*To* PAULET. Good Sir,
I have unwittingly caused you much sorrow,—
Bereft you of your age's only stay.
Oh, let me hope you do not hate my name.

PAULET (*giving her his hand*).
The Lord be with you! go your way in peace.

SCENE IX.

HANNAH KENNEDY *and the other women of the* QUEEN *crowd into the room, with marks of horror. The* SHERIFF *follows them, a white staff in his hand; behind are seen, through the open doors, men under arms.*

MARY. What ails thee, Hannah?—Yes—my hour is come—
The Sheriff comes to lead me to my fate,
And part we must—farewell!—

KENNEDY *and* CURL. We will not leave thee.
We will not part from thee.

MARY (*to* MELVIL). You, worthy Sir,
And my dear faithful Hannah, shall attend me,
In my last moments. I am sure, my Lord
Will not refuse my heart this consolation.

BUR. For this I have no warrant.

MARY. How, my Lord;
Can you deny me, then, this small petition?
Respect my sex; who shall attend me else,
And yield me the last service?—sure it never
Can be my sister's pleasure that in me
My sex should be insulted; that these men
With their rude hands, should touch my royal person.

BUR. Tis order'd that no woman shall ascend
The scaffold steps with you—their tears and moans—

MARY. She shall not weep, my Lord, she shall not moan;
I answer for my Hannah's resolution.
Be merciful; divide me not so soon
From my true foster-mother, from my friend.
She bore me on her arms into this life,
Let her, then, gently lead me to my death.

PAULET (*to* BURLEIGH).
Yield to her wishes.

BURLEIGH. Be it so.

MARY. I now
Have nothing in this world to wish for more.
[*She takes the crucifix and kisses it.*
My God! My Comforter! My blest Redeemer!
As once thy arms were stretch'd upon the cross,
Let them be now extended to receive me!
[*She turns round to go, at the same moment her eyes fall upon* LEICESTER, *who, on her going, starts involuntarily and turns his eyes towards her: at this sight* MARY *trembles, her knees fail her, she is about to fall, when* LEICESTER *catches at her, and receives her in his arms; she regards him for*

some time earnestly, and in silence; he cannot support her looks; at length she speaks.

You keep your word, my Lord of Leicester: for
You promised me your arm to lead me forth
From prison, and you lend it to me now.
At length the wish'd for day is come, and what
Was oft the object of my fondest dreams
Is now accomplish'd: and the Earl of Leicester,
The long expected, the long wish'd for friend,
Appears at length in Fotheringay Castle.
I see him standing in my prison; all
Is ready for the journey; all the gates
Stand open, and at length I cross the threshold,
Conducted by his hand; and now I leave
These dismal walls behind me, and for ever.
All is fulfill'd, and you have sav'd your honor.

[*He stands as if annihilated; she continues, with a gentle voice.*

Yes, Leicester; not for liberty alone
I wish'd to be indebted to your hands.
You should have made me bless that liberty
Led by your hand, and happy in your love,
I hop'd once more to taste the joys of life.
Yes; now that I'm prepar'd from all the world
To part, and to become a happy spirit,
Whom earthly inclinations tempt no more,
Now, Leicester, I may venture to confess,
Without a blush, the frailty I have conquer'd—
Farewell, my lord; and, if you can, be happy!
To woo two Queens has been your daring aim;
You have disdain'd a tender, loving heart;
Betray'd it, in the hope to win a proud one;
Kneel at the feet of Queen Elizabeth!

May your reward not prove your punishment.
Farewell; I now have nothing more on earth.

[*She goes, preceded by the Sheriff, at her side* MELVIL *and her Nurse;* BURLEIGH *and* PAULET *follow; the others, wailing, follow her with their eyes till she disappears; they then retire through the other two doors.*

SCENE X.

LEICESTER (*remaining alone*).

Do I live still? Can I still bear to live?
Will not this roof fall down and bury me?
Yawns no abyss, to swallow in its gulf
The veriest wretch on earth? What have I lost?
Oh, what a pearl have I not cast away!
What bliss celestial madly dash'd aside!
She's gone, a spirit purged from earthly stain,
And the despair of hell remains for me!
Where is the purpose now with which I came
To stifle my heart's voice in callous scorn?
To see her head descend upon the block
With unaverted and indifferent eyes?
How doth her presence wake my slumb'ring shame?
Must she in death surround me with Love's toils?
Lost, wretched man! No more it suits thee now
To melt away, in womanly compassion:
Love's golden bliss lies not upon thy path.
Then arm thy breast in panoply of steel,
And henceforth be thy brows of adamant!
Wouldst thou not lose the guerdon of thy guilt,
Thou must uphold, complete it daringly!
Pity the dumb; mine eyes be petrified!
I'll see—I will be witness of her fall.

[*He advances with resolute steps towards the door, through which* MARY *passed; but stops suddenly half way.*

No! No! The terrors of all Hell possess me.
I cannot look upon the dreadful deed;
I cannot see her die!—Hark! What was that?
They are already there. Beneath my feet
The bloody business is preparing. Hark!
I hear their voices—Hence!—Away—Away—
From this abode of misery and death!

[*He attempts to escape by another door; finds it locked, and returns.*

How! Does some demon chain me to this spot?
To hear what I would shudder to behold?
That voice—it is the Dean's, exhorting her;
She interrupts him. Hark—she prays aloud—
Her voice is firm—now all is still, quite still!
And sobs and women's moans are all I hear.
Now they undress her—they remove the stool—
She kneels upon the cushion—lays her head—

[*Having spoken these last words, and paused awhile, he is seen with a convulsive motion suddenly to shrink, and faint away: a confused hum of voices is heard at the same moment from below, and continues for some time.*

SCENE XI.

The second Chamber in the Fourth Act.

ELIZABETH (*entering from a side door; her gait and action expressive of the most violent uneasiness*).

No message yet arrived! What! no one here!
Will evening never come? Stands the sun still
In its ethereal course? I can no more

Remain upon the rack of expectation!
Is it accomplish'd?—Is it not?—I shudder
At both events, and do not dare to ask.
My Lord of Leicester comes not,—Burleigh too,
Whom I appointed to fulfil the sentence.
If they have quitted London, then 'tis done,
The bolt has left its rest—it cuts the air—
It strikes;—has struck already:—were my realm
At stake, I could now not arrest its course.
Who's there?

SCENE XII.

Enter a PAGE.

ELIZABETH. Return'd alone? Where are the Lords?
PAGE. My Lord High Treasurer, and the Earl of Leicester—
ELIZ. Where are they?
PAGE. They are not in London.
ELIZ. No!
Where are they, then?
PAGE. That no one could inform me!
Before the dawn, mysteriously, in haste,
They quitted London.
ELIZABETH (*exultingly*). I am Queen of England!
[*Walking up and down in the greatest agitation.*
Go—call me—no, remain, boy! She is dead—
Now have I room upon the earth at last.
Why do I shake? Whence comes this agueish dread?
My fears are cover'd by the grave; who dares
To say I did it?—I have tears enough
In store to weep her fall.—Are you still here?
[*To the* PAGE

Command my secretary Davison
To come to me this instant. Let the Earl
Of Shrewsbury be summon'd. Here he comes.
[*Exit* PAGE.

SCENE XIII.

Enter SHREWSBURY.

ELIZ. Welcome, my noble Lord. What tidings—say.
It cannot be a trifle which hath led
Your footsteps hither at so late an hour.

SHREW. My Liege, the doubts that hung upon my heart
And dutiful concern for your fair fame
Directed me this morning to the Tower,
Where Mary's secretaries, Nau and Curl,
Are now confined as pris'ners, for I wish'd
Once more to put their evidence to proof.
On my arrival the lieutenant seem'd
Embarrass'd and perplex'd; refus'd to show me
His pris'ners; but my threats obtained admittance.
God! what a sight was there! With frantic looks,
With hair dishevell'd, on his pallet lay
The Scot, like one tormented by a fury.
The miserable man no sooner saw me
Then at my feet he fell, and there, with screams,
Clasping my knees, and writhing like a worm,
Implored, conjured me to acquaint him with
His Sov'reign's destiny, for vague reports
Had somehow reach'd the dungeons of the Tow'r
That she had been condemn'd to suffer death.
When I confirm'd these tidings, adding, too,
That on his evidence she had been doom'd,
He started wildly up,—caught by the throat
His fellow pris'ner, with the giant strength
Of madness tore him to the ground, and tried

To strangle him. No sooner had we sav'd
The wretch from his fierce grapple than at once
He turn'd his rage against himself, and beat
His breast with savage fists; then curs'd himself
And his companions to the depths of hell!
His evidence was false; the fatal letters
To Babington, which he had sworn were true,
He now denounc'd as forgeries—for he
Had set down words the Queen had never spoken.
The traitor Nau had led him to this treason.
Then ran he to the casement, threw it wide,
With frantic force, and cried into the street
So loud, that all the people gather'd round
I am the man, Queen Mary's secretary,
The traitor, who accus'd his mistress falsely;
I bore false witness, and am cursed for ever!

ELIZ. You said yourself that he had lost his wits;
A madman's words prove nothing.

SHREWSBURY. Yet this madness
Serves in itself to swell the proof. My Liege,
Let me conjure thee, be not over hasty;
Pri'thee, give order for a new inquiry!

ELIZ. I will, my Lord, because it is your wish,
Not that I can believe my noble peers
Have in this case pronounced a hasty judgment.
To set your mind at rest, the inquiry shall
Be straight renew'd. Well that 'tis not too late!—
Upon the honor of our royal name
No, not the shadow of a doubt shall rest.

SCENE XIV.

Enter DAVISON.

ELIZ. The sentence, Sir, which I but late entrusted
Unto your keeping;—where is it?

DAVISON (*in the utmost astonishment*). The sentence?
ELIZABETH (*more urgent*).
Which yesterday I gave into your charge.
DAV. Into my charge, my Liege!
ELIZABETH. The people urged
And baited me to sign it. I perforce
Was driven to yield obedience to their will.
I did so; did so, on extreme constraint,
And in your hands deposited the paper.
To gain time was my purpose; you remember
What then I told you. Now, the paper, Sir!
SHREW. Restore it, Sir, affairs have changed since then,
The inquiry must be set on foot anew.
DAV. Anew! Eternal mercy!
ELIZABETH. Why this pause,
This hesitation? Where, Sir, is the paper?
DAV. I am undone! Undone! My fate is sealed.
ELIZABETH (*interrupting him violently*).
Let me not fancy, Sir—
DAVISON. O, I am lost!
I have it not.
ELIZABETH. How? What?
SHREWSBURY. O, God in heav'n!
DAV. It is in Burleigh's hands—since yesterday.
ELIZ. Wretch! Is it thus you have obeyed my orders?
Did I not lay my strict injunction on you
To keep it carefully?
DAVISON. No such injunction
Was laid on me, my Liege.
ELIZABETH. Give me the lie!
Opprobrious wretch! When did I order you
To give the paper into Burleigh's hands?
DAV. Never expressly in so many words.—

ELIZ. And, paltering villain! dare you then presume
To construe, as you list, my words—and lay
Your bloody meaning on them? Woe betide you
If evil come of this officious deed!
Your life shall answer the event to me.
Earl Shrewsbury, you see how my good name
Has been abused!

SHREWSBURY. I see! O, God in heav'n!

ELIZ. What say you?

SHREWSBURY. If the Knight has dar'd to act
In this, upon his own authority,
Without the knowledge of your majesty,
He must be cited to the Court of Peers
To answer there for subjecting thy name
To the abhorrence of all after time.

SCENE XV.

Enter BURLEIGH.

BURLEIGH (*bowing his knee before the Queen*).
Long life and glory to my royal mistress,
And may all enemies of her dominions
End like this Stuart.

[SHREWSBURY *hides his face*—DAVISON *wrings his hands in despair.*

ELIZABETH. Speak, my Lord; did you
From me receive the warrant?

BURLEIGH. No, my Queen
From Davison.

ELIZABETH. And did he in my name
Deliver it?

BURLEIGH. No, that I cannot say.

ELIZ. And dar'd you then to execute the writ

Thus hastily, nor wait to know my pleasure?
Just was the sentence—we are free from blame
Before the world; yet it behoved thee not
To intercept our natural clemency.
For this, my Lord, I banish you my presence;
And as this forward will was *yours* alone,
Bear *you* alone the curse of the misdeed. [*To* DAV.
For you, Sir, who have trait'rously o'erstepp'd
The bounds of your commission, and betray'd
A sacred pledge entrusted to your care,
A more severe tribunal is prepar'd:
Let him be straight conducted to the Tow'r,
And capital arraignments fil'd against him.
My honest Talbot, you alone have prov'd,
'Mongst all my counsellors, an upright man:
You shall henceforward be my guide—my friend.

SHREW. O! banish not the truest of your friends;
Nor cast those into prison who for you
Have acted; who for you are silent now.
But suffer me, great Queen, to give the seal,
Which, these twelve years, I've borne unworthily,
Back to your royal hands, and take my leave.

ELIZABETH (*surprised*).
No, Shrewsbury; you surely would not now
Desert me? No; not now.

SHREWSBURY. Pardon, I am
Too old, and this right hand has grown too stiff
To set the seal upon your later deeds.

ELIZ. Will he forsake me who has sav'd my life?

SHREW. 'Tis little I have done;—I could not save
Your nobler part. Live—govern happily!
Your rival's dead. Henceforth you've nothing more

To fear,—henceforth, to nothing pay regard.

[*Exit.*

ELIZABETH (*to the* EARL *of* KENT, *who enters*).

Send for the Earl of Leicester.

KENT. He desires

To be excused—he is embark'd for France.

[*The Curtain drops.*

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Mary Stuart

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